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Neves
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MARVEL

REALM
OF

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Writer:	**Torunn Grønbekk**
Artists:	**Diógenes Neves** (#1–2, #4), **Bruno Oliveira** (#3) with **Rafael Pimentel** (#4)
Color Artists:	**Rain Beredo** with **Protobunker's** **Dono Sánchez-Almara** (#4)
Letterer:	**VC's Clayton Cowles**
Cover Art:	**Stephanie Hans**
Design:	**Tom Muller**
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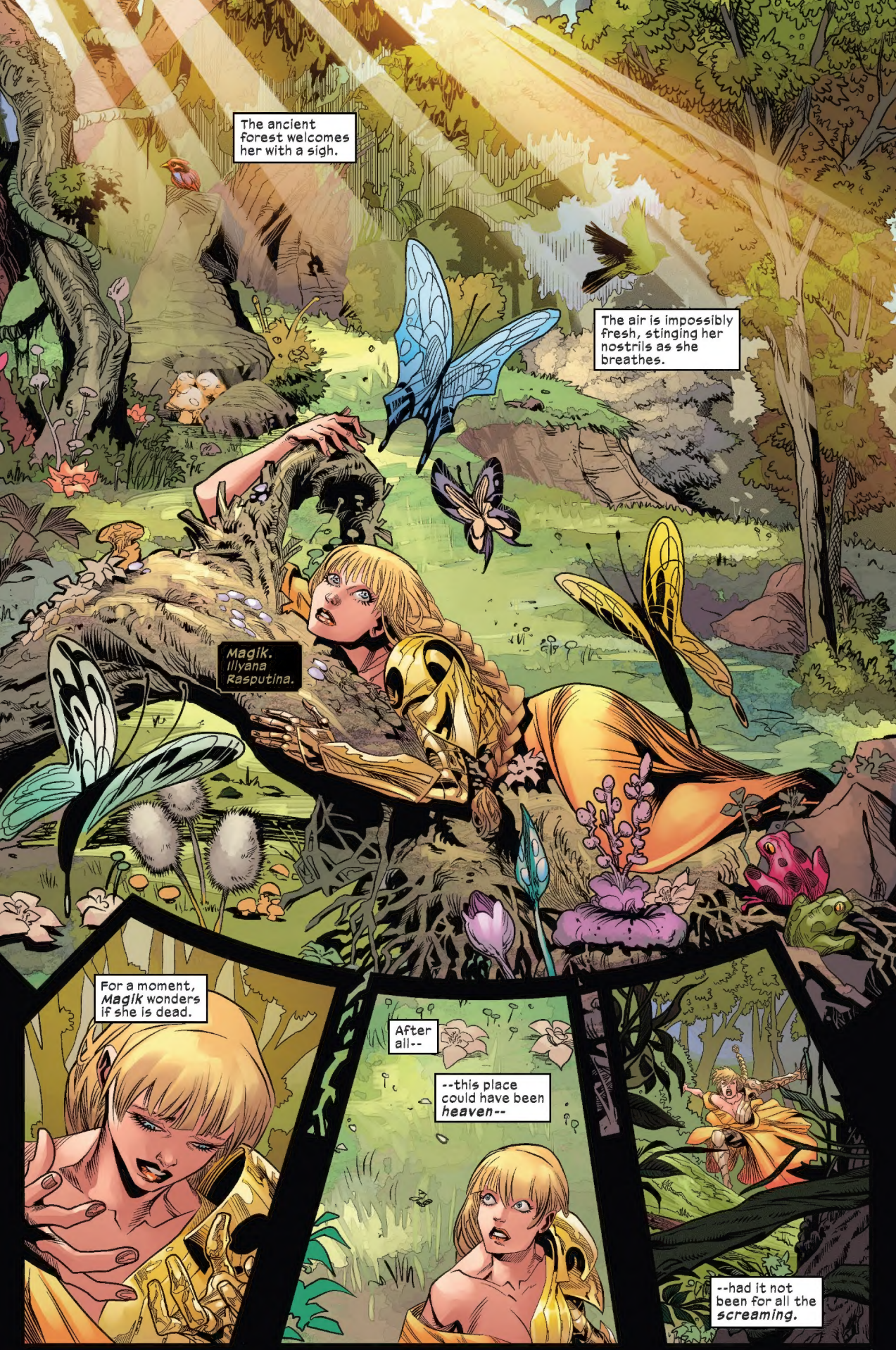
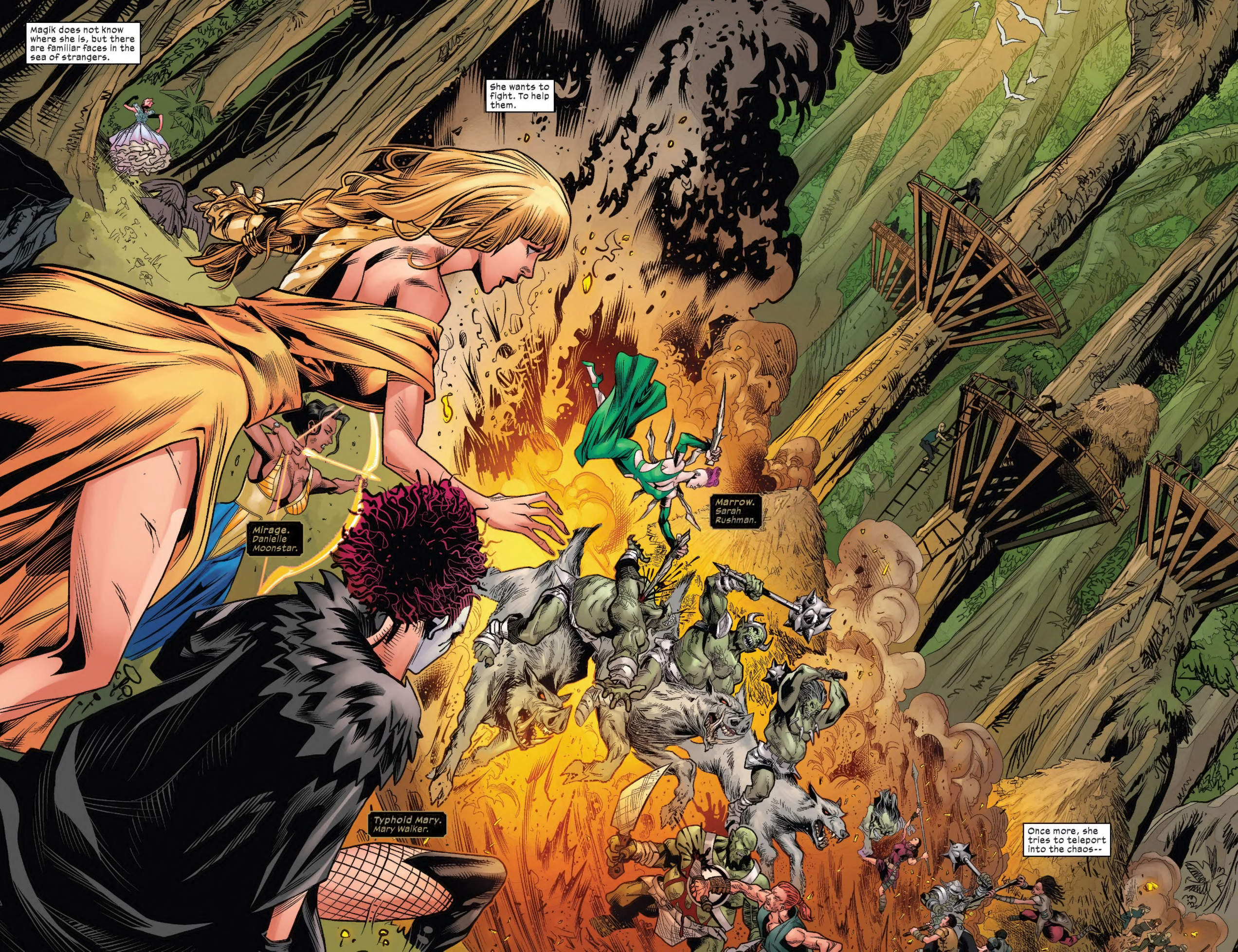
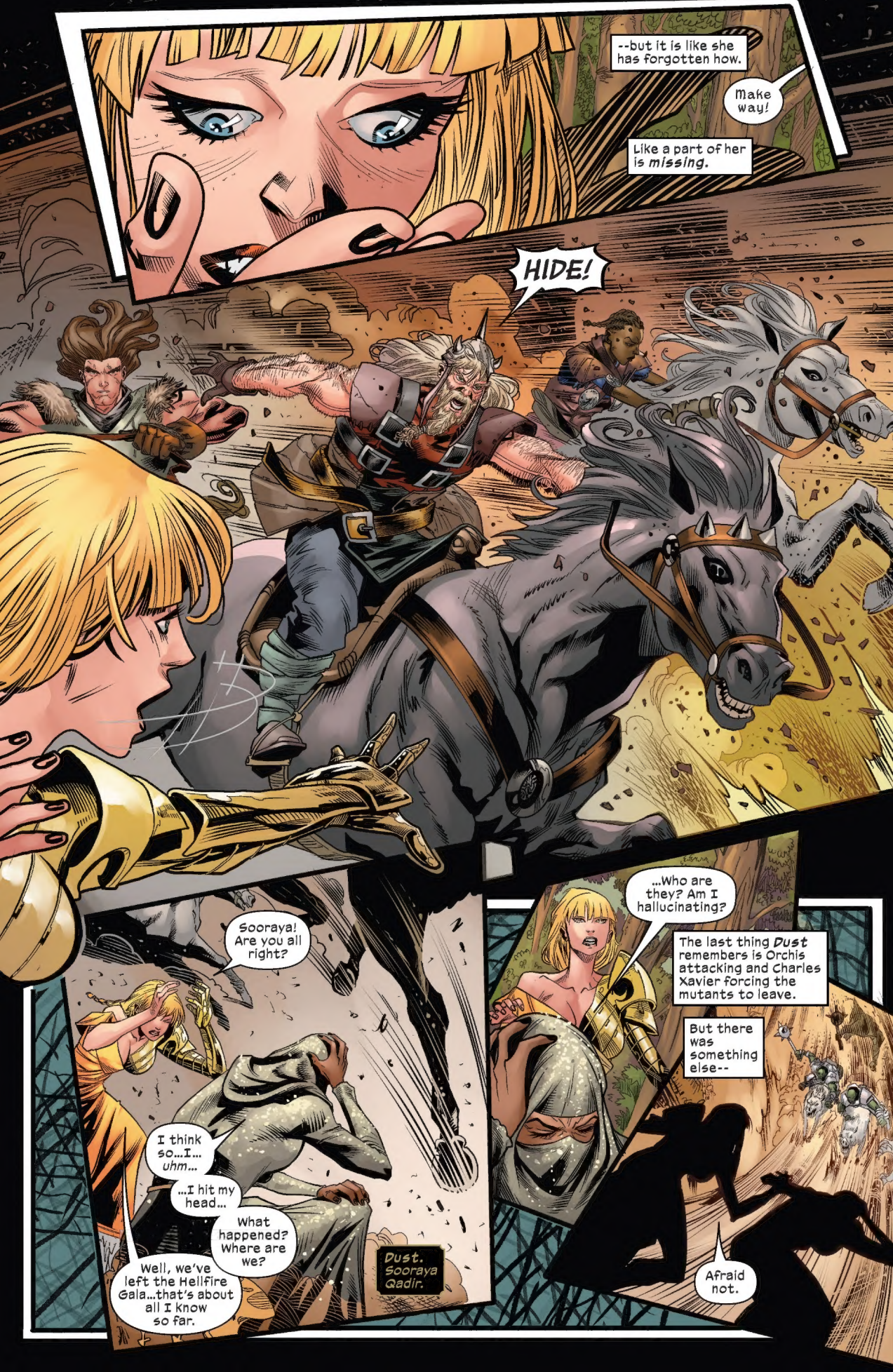

The ancient forest welcomes her with a sigh.
The air is impossibly fresh, stinging her nostrils as she breathes.
Magik. Ilyana Rasputina.
For a moment, Magik wonders if she is dead.
After all--
--this place could have been heaven--
--had it not been for all the screaming.


Magik does not know where she is, but there are familiar faces in the sea of strangers.
She wants to fight. To help them.
Mirage. Danielle Moonstar.
Marrow. Sarah Rushman.
Typhoid Mary. Mary Walker.
Once more, she tries to teleport into the chaos--


--but it is like she has forgotten how.
Make way!
Like a part of her is *missing*.
HIDE!
Sooraya! Are you all right?
I think so...I... uhm...
...I hit my head...
What happened? Where are we?
Well, we've left the Hellfire Gala...that's about all I know so far.
Dust. Sooraya Qadir.
...Who are they? Am I hallucinating?
The last thing *Dust* remembers is Orchis attacking and Charles Xavier forcing the mutants to leave.
But there was something else--
Afraid not.

A voice. Words spoken.
Typhoid Mary! Are you just going to sit there?
Hey...this isn't my fight... I don't even know where the %$#% we are.
And then they were pulled from the world.
Mary! Can you please DO SOMETHING?!
What about Magik? She's not doing anything.
Eh, I don't...
She does not know this place--
My powers... I don't have... access to them at the moment.
Now that is funny.
Mary!
I would fight, Dani, darling--
--but who is the enemy?
How do we know whom to fight?
--nor these people...
When someone attacks with overwhelming force, they're usually the bad guys.
And though Dani Moonstar makes sense, Dust wonders:

"If she is right--
"--what does that make us?"
Fiiine.

Where did you land?
In some trees over there...
Okay, so there could be more of us in the forest.
Magik--can you gather the mutants in sight... see if you can get them out of the way?
Well... yeah, sure.
Dust, can you search the surrounding woods?
But first, *end this* before we do more harm than good.
These *creatures*... are you sure they deserve it?
Help!
They're attacking children, Dust!

Very well.
The storm spares all who lay down their arms.
Oh, come on, Dust!
It was just getting fun!
There is no pain for those who do not.

Why did I even get up?
When the dust settles, the battle is won.
It is *the four*...it must be!
I thought we'd have more time.
There was never any time, Ellia.
But there is no celebration.
But what incredible power, Trabin! With them by our side, *the White Witch* does not stand a chance!
We will see, Vonos.
I think the words you're looking for are *thank you.*
Merci? Danke? Grazie? Obrigado? Takk?
Forgive us. We are truly grateful for your assistance.
If we seem *ungracious,* it is because--
--your arrival marks, if not the beginning of *the end...* then the beginning of great suffering and uncertainty.

What the hell is that supposed to mean?
Question. Where are we?
Please forgive me. I am Trabin, leader of House Mult.
Allow me to welcome you to Vanaheim, one of the Ten Realms.
Van-what-now?
Vanaheim?! That cannot be...
We have been expecting you.
We will answer your questions as best we can, though, I warn you, we do not have all the answers.
But first, I must ask--
--is the one you call Curse with you?
She was... she was in my arms.
Curse?
Stop being such a little @!%# and get out here, Curse.
She was here...!
CURSE!

[fall__of]
[_____X]

[FALL OF X]

VIOLENCE OF VICTORY

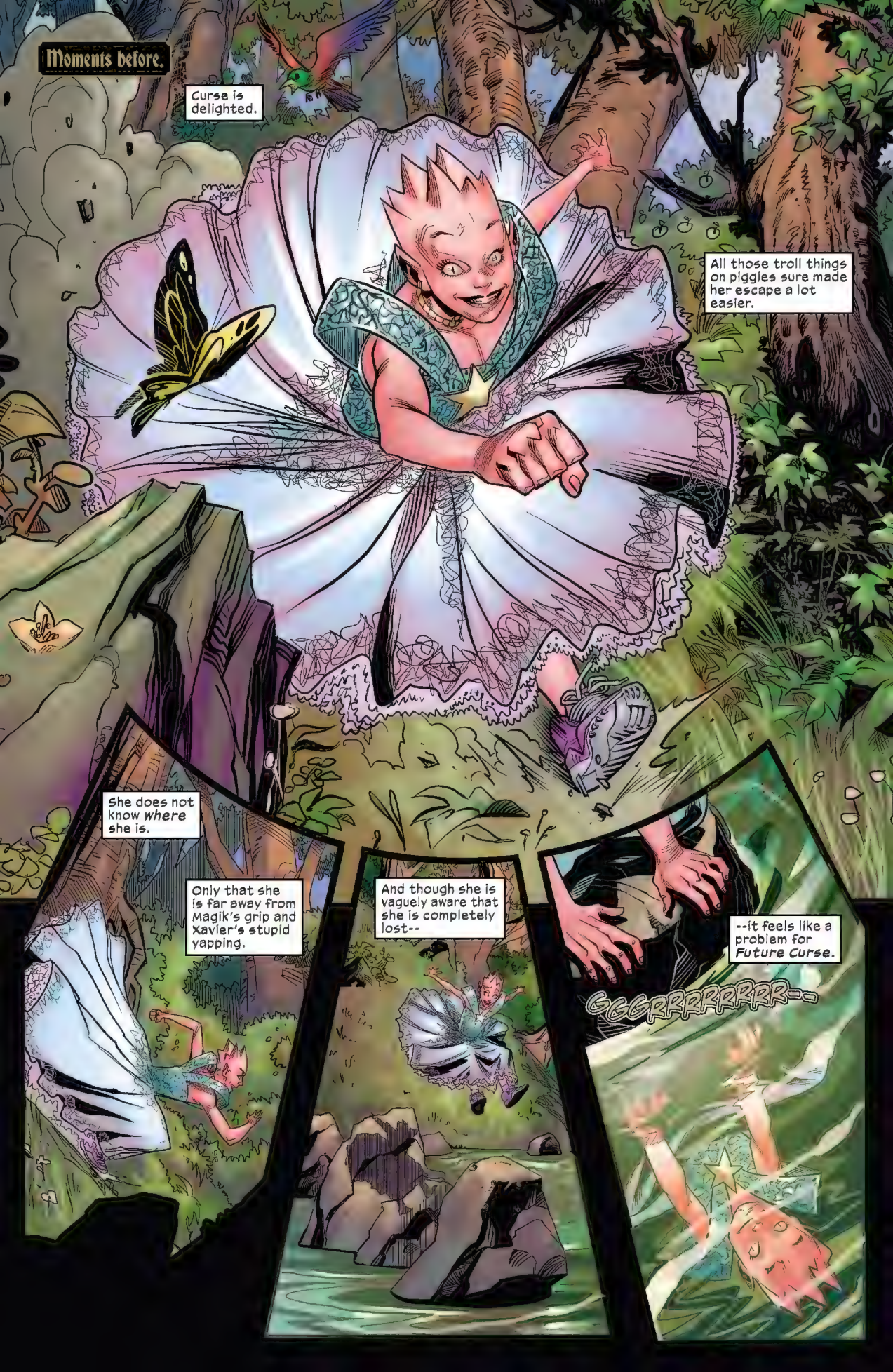
What should have been a joyful night welcoming the newly elected X-Men team and celebrating mutantkind turned into a nightmare following Orchis' vicious assault at the Hellfire Gala. In an act of desperation, Professor Xavier used his powers to force as many mutants as he could to walk through the nearest Krakoan gates in the hope of sending them to safety.

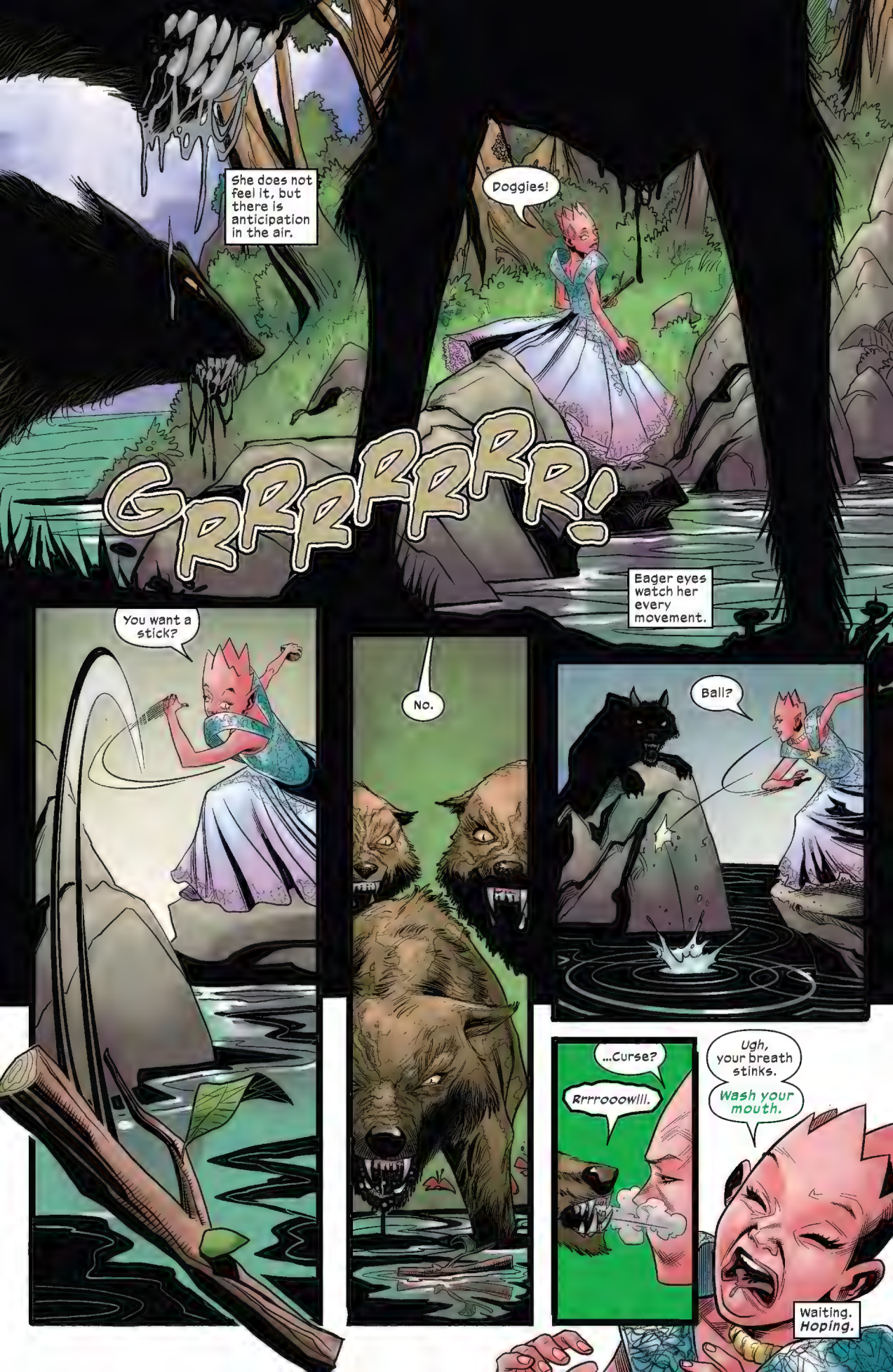
Magik, Mirage, Dust, Curse, Typhoid Mary and a handful of other mutants were among those who walked through the gates, but while they managed to escape one battle, they seem to have fallen straight into another. Only now they have no idea where in the universe they are -- and with Magik's teleportation powers on the fritz, they truly have no way home.

1___[MAGIK]
2___[MIRAGE]
3___[TYPHOID MARY]
4___[DUST]
5___[MARROW]
6___[CURSE]

The White Witch

1


Moments before.
Curse is delighted.
All those troll things on piggies sure made her escape a lot easier.
She does not know *where* she is.
Only that she is far away from Magik's grip and Xavier's stupid yapping.
And though she is vaguely aware that she is completely lost--
--it feels like a problem for *Future Curse*.
GGGRRRRRRRRR--


She does not feel it, but there is anticipation in the air.
Doggies!
GRRRRRRR!
Eager eyes watch her every movement.
You want a stick?
No.
Ball?
...Curse?
Rrrrooowlll.
Ugh, your breath stinks.
Wash your mouth.
Waiting. Hoping.

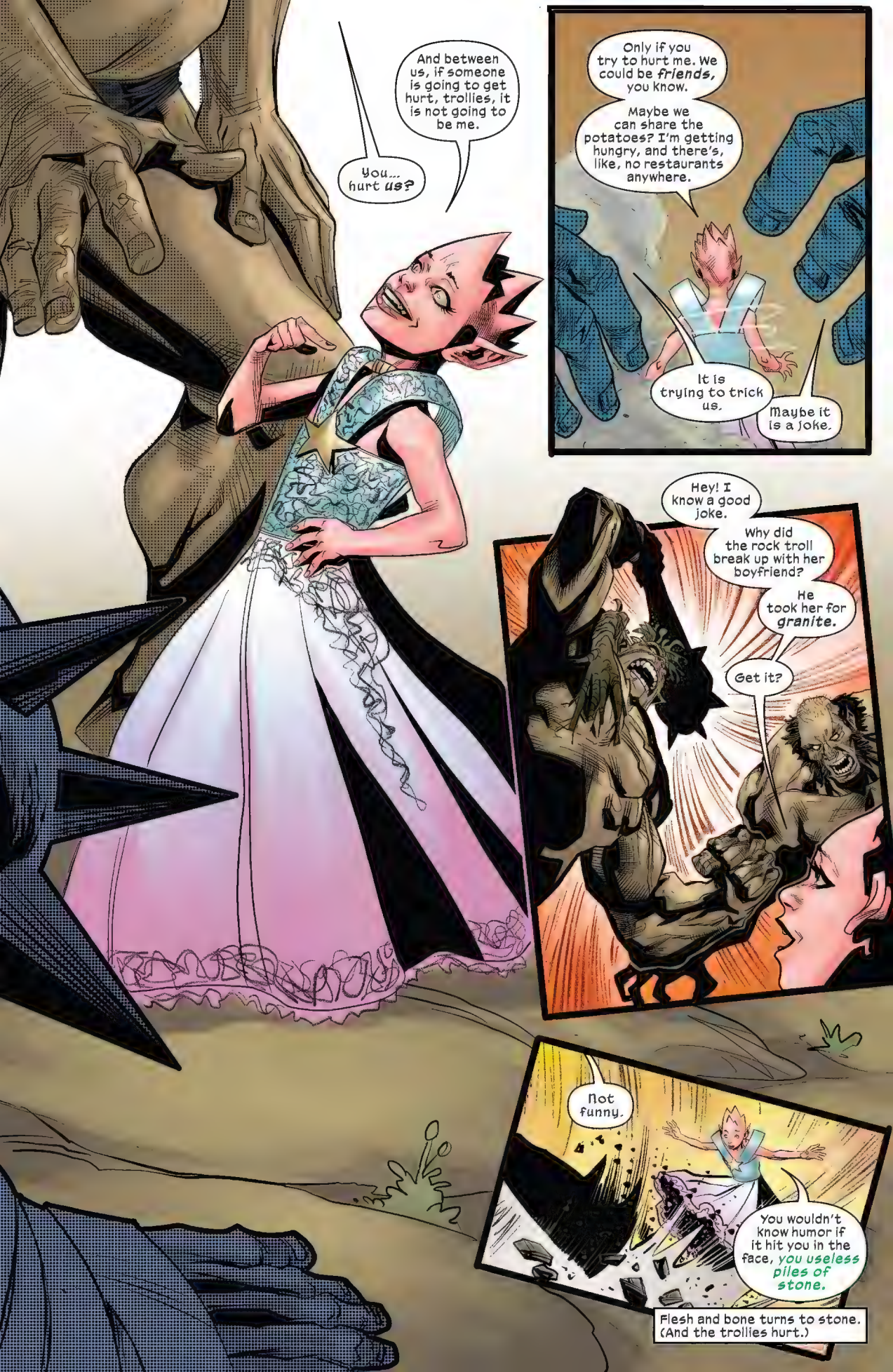
That's better.
Yip!
And when the *jinx* hits--
Yip!
Yip!
You'll thank me later!
--there is *relief.*
Excitement.
And the wind seems to whisper:
"It begins."

These boots were made for *standing* on *red carpets*.
And resting on *silk sheets*.
They were not made for *dirt*--
--and *dung*--
--and *stone*--
--and--
My horse is at your disposal, Lady Mary.
Do I look like an equestrian to you?
Oh, there is nothing to it.
Get your hands off me!
Just hold on. I will lead him.
You...!
I...

Danielle Moonstar reaches for the minds of the creatures near her.
Unspoken questions are answered through invisible bonds.
They have not seen the child.
Is that better?
Do not speak to me.
They have not seen *Curse*.
But they are willing to help.
--Besides, if Trabin's men can't find her, Sooraya will. She can cover more ground than anyone.
Any news from the animals, Dani?
Not yet, but they will join the search.
I wish I could do... something.
You are, Illyana. We have a dozen wounded mutants who need your assistance. You are getting them to safety.

Magik feels helpless.
Do you think she is scared?
Curse? No.
If anything, it is Vanaheim that should worry.
(And guilty.)
They might be doing everything they can to find her.
But the forest is endless--
--the sun is setting--
Welcome to House Mult.
You will be safe here. We have arranged beds for the wounded, and dinner will be served shortly.
When you said you were the leader of *a house*, I thought you meant... you know--
--an actual *house*.
Goodness' sake, Mary.
--and she knows that no one will find Curse--

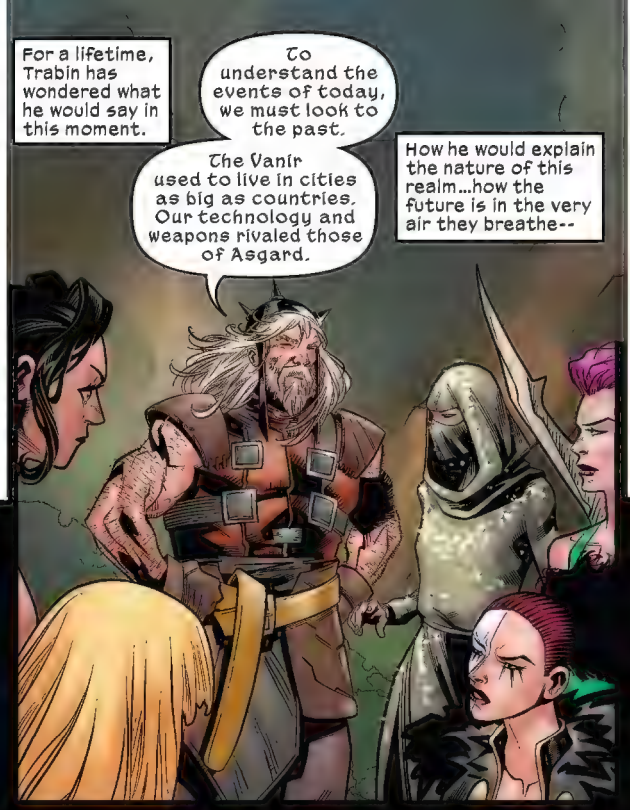
--unless she wants to be found.
There it is. Finally. Waiting all day.
It is scrawny.
...Trolls?
Cool.
Are you sure this is the one? She said it would be 'nough for supper.
Maybe if we boil it with 'tatoes...
Boil me?
And onions.
I hate onions.
You... don't get any onions.
Because you will be dead.
Oh. You don't want to do that.
What does it mean?
I want to do that. Hit it dead. Boil with 'tatoes...
And onions.
You don't want to do that because...I do this thing--
--and I don't know exactly how it works--
--but I make things happen. Bad things.
And someone gets hurt. Always. Either me or someone else.


And between us, if someone is going to get hurt, trollies, it is not going to be me.
You... hurt us?
Only if you try to hurt me. We could be friends, you know.
Maybe we can share the potatoes? I'm getting hungry, and there's, like, no restaurants anywhere.
It is trying to trick us.
Maybe it is a joke.
Hey! I know a good joke.
Why did the rock troll break up with her boyfriend?
He took her for granite.
Get it?
Not funny.
You wouldn't know humor if it hit you in the face, you useless piles of stone.
Flesh and bone turns to stone. (And the trollies hurt.)

House Mult, one hour later.
Oh for $%&@'s sake, Dust.
I was eating that!
I searched the entire west side, but I could find no sign of her. What about Trabin's men?
His scouts should be back soon.
What have you learned so far?
That MSG is the true meaning of life?
That corn syrup gets a bad rap?
I would sell my soul for a burger right now.
Well, we landed in the middle of a civil war between the Vanir and someone they call the White Witch.
Mhm. The forest is a battlefield. Most of the houses I came across were burned and abandoned.
How are the wounded?
Looks like everyone will be all right. Some broken bones, but nothing life-threatening. The Vanir healers are taking care of them--
--but I would like to know how they knew we were coming...how they knew the exact number of hospital beds to prepare.
I mean, they'd been expecting us? What does that even mean?

Well, Vanaheim is a realm of divination.
Premonitions and prophecy are a fact of life here.
Bargain-bin Boromir is coming.
Your soldiers are on high alert.
Are you expecting hostility?
Always. Our seers can predict her attacks to a certain point, but--
--it can be hard to interpret their visions correctly.
And it is... disheartening for our soldiers to know too much.
We know something is coming today. Our forces are prepared. That is enough.
Is this the White Witch? The same who attacked us earlier today?
Indeed.
Your seers...is that how you knew that we were coming?
Well, yes and no.
I think it's time you told us everything you know.

Uuurkkkkh.
The power still echoes in the stone.
Like reality has yet to catch up.
How did it...feel?
The White Witch can sense it. Smell it.
When she changed your very *being*...how did it feel?
Can't move my hand.
You're in pieces, my dear.
Can you put us back together?
She tries. Gathering her considerable power, she attempts to undo Curse's jinx.
I am... *delighted* to say that I cannot.
Her powers are quite extraordinary.
The girl said *we* would hurt...
...or *she* would hurt.
But *we* hurt.
We *hurt*.
Yes. You hurt. I cannot help you with that--
--but do not worry...I will make her hurt too.


For a lifetime, Trabin has wondered what he would say in this moment.
To understand the events of today, we must look to the past.
The Vanir used to live in cities as big as countries. Our technology and weapons rivaled those of Asgard.
How he would explain the nature of this realm...how the future is in the very air they breathe--

But our strength came with attention. Unrest. War.
We saw the future. We saw what awaited us if we did not act.
--how it guides them.

So we changed. Changed the fate of the realm. Left the cities to ruins and chose a simpler existence.
Ever think you might have overcorrected?

Be quiet, Mary.
That was the first time the demise of Vanaheim was prophesied.
The second... begins with you.

And how lost they feel now that it has gone dark.
Mirage, Marrow, Dust and Typhoid Mary. If you would follow me to the library.

No, thanks. I am over this unsolicited history lesson.
Please, Mary. I think what you are about to see will interest you.
Magik is coming too.

Prophecy in Warfare

The use of divination as a strategic tool in warfare has yielded variable results throughout history. During the first age, when Ijord, son of Buri, brother of Mimir and Bor, ruled the realm, divination was primarily employed as a means of motivation rather than a tactical resource. Warriors who knew their lives would be forfeit in battle would enter the fray with an unwavering determination to die with honor, fighting with ferocity and unyielding courage.

That was until Kvasir the Wise posed the following questions: *If the warriors had not been privy to the prophecy of their demise, would they have still perished? Or would they have fought with more prudence and survived?*

These questions plagued the Vanir, and the notion of altering destiny rather than submitting to it was born.

This concept was successfully implemented multiple times, most notably on two occasions:

Before the war with Asgard, it is believed that it was the catastrophic prophetic visions of the impending battle that inspired Freyr to seek the aid of Surtur. Historians contend that this decisive act saved Vanaheim in the early stages of the war and enabled the Vanir to hold their ground against the Asgardian forces. When Freyr, renowned for his pride, humbly sought the aid of the fire giant, he acknowledged his own weakness. It is believed that this was the key to changing the fate of the realm.

The second notable event occurred when the Vanir chose to forsake their technological advancements and the luxuries of their citadels in favor of a more modest existence. This decision transformed a future shrouded in war, death and darkness into one of tranquility and peace. It is suggested that the Vanir's collective attrition of comfort and ambition was the catalyst that caused fate to shift.

The question plaguing Vanir scholars now that they look into an uncertain future is what lessons they can learn from the past to change their destiny. The coming war with the White Witch is well-documented in the Library of Prophecies, and for decades, scholars and strategists have studied the events leading up to the battle in the hopes of finding some key moment to change in an attempt to alter fate.

When asked about the issue at hand, Haggard Thunson, First Strategist of Sadran's army, responded as follows:

If the goal is to outsmart fate, it may be necessary to contradict our inherent tendencies. In practical terms, however, I do not know what measures to recommend. Should the Vanir yield to this upstart Witch? Never. We know **the Four** *play a crucial part in the battle to come, but would we deny strangers who seek our help? Or, going one step further, would we kill those who stand ready to help us? I would argue that sacrificing four lives to save the realm is a small price to pay for peace, but it is also hard to believe that peace will grow from bloodshed. War, famously, begets war.*

On the other hand, I cannot help but wonder--

--is it the act of inaction that will doom us in the end?

We have seen your arrival for centuries.
This is not unusual in itself, but what is noteworthy is that we cannot see past the events in which you are involved.
And what exactly does this prophecy say?
There will be a battle. The White Witch attacks, and we defend our land.
We know that four of the strangers will play a part in it.
But there is an unpredictable element. A chaotic power not even fate seems to understand.
An event. An unleashing of power. After this, the future is lost.
For many years, this force was believed to be a magical object.
But modern scholars have suggested that it could be a person.
We have collected all accounts of the prophecy in this library.
It was, at some point, a tradition among our seers to spend time here, trying to figure out the intricacies of this time.
What is... that?!
Is that... us?
HA!

One of the seers had a passion for sculpture, and she sculpted the four strangers as she saw them in her visions.
Poor little Magik.
Even fate deems you insignificant.
The horn! We are under attack.
I'd rather be insignificant than a petulant child, Mary.
White Eagles!
What are they carrying? Are those... *people?* Are they alive?
Marrow's questions are answered by the scent filling the air.

As bodies fall from the sky, the stench of death envelopes them.
Well, I suppose Trabin's scouts are back. Let's *hope* they didn't find Curse before they were slaughtered.
Goodness' sake, Mary!
Could you help out? Preferably without burning the camp down?
It feels like a play. A move in a game they do not understand.
Bloody hell!

Mary! Do something! It's going for the boy!
Oh, wouldn't want to burn anything down.
Help!
And they are losing.
You talk to birds... Can't you just tell it to stop?
MOTHER! HELP ME!
Not how it works, Mary!
Oh... dammit.
AAARGHHH!
YEEEEEEE!
I don't understand... they didn't attack anyone. Why take the boy?

A few minutes later.
The boy's quiet cries quiver through the air.
What the hell?!
HHhhelp... mm-e-e!
Meek and horrifying, it is the sound of terror.
The Witch watches with bated breath, willing Curse to take the bait.
P-p-please!
Put him down, you feathery %$#@&!
Willing her to use her power.
Nooooo!
I'm warning you, you overgrown pigeons!
You wannabe swans!
Willing her to save him.
SHRRP
ARGH!
PLUCK YOU!

She wants to see what happens.
SKRAAA!
AARGHH!
Ooops! Sorry!
Sorry, sorry, sorry!

I didn't mean to--
I was trying to help.
SPLSH
SPLSH
SPLSH
SPLSH
SPLSH
SPLSH

HELP--ME!
Hold on!

Hold on...I'm coming--
~Sob~ I want to go... home.
The Witch teases the currents--

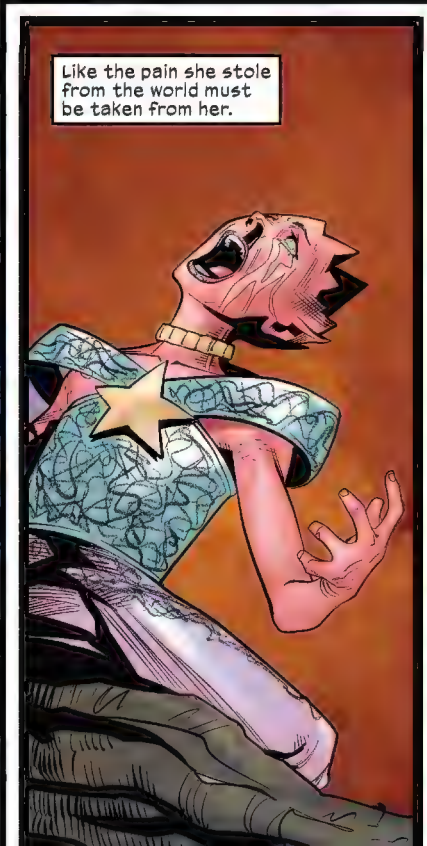
--and breaks the branch.
Then...
It will kill him, unless--

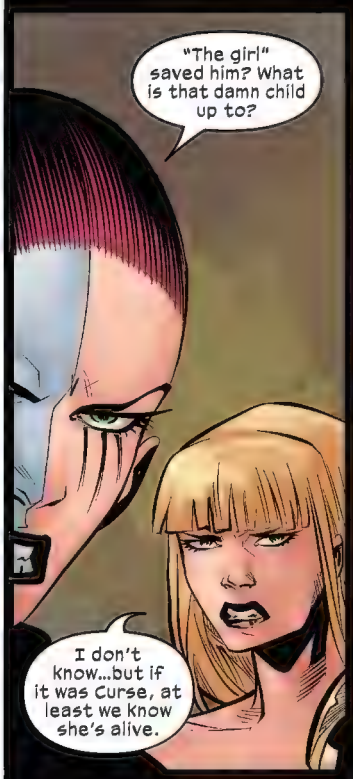
...GO HOME!

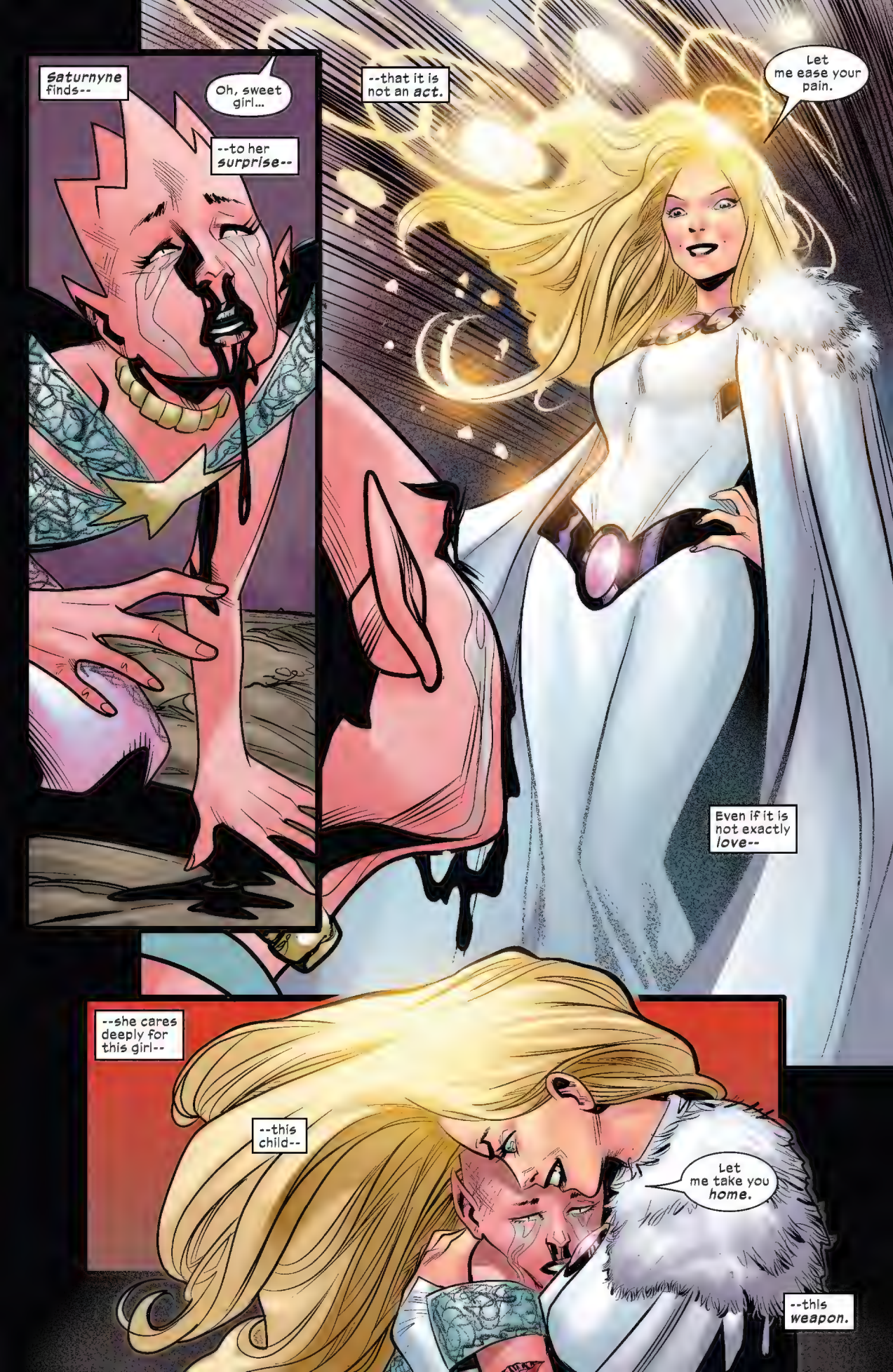
Reality yields.

And Curse hurts.

What the hell?!
Mother!
She saved me! The girl...


Like the pain she stole from the world must be taken from her.


"The girl" saved him? What is that damn child up to?
I don't know...but if it was Curse, at least we know she's alive.


Saturnyne finds--
Oh, sweet girl...
--to her surprise--
--that it is not an act.
Let me ease your pain.
Even if it is not exactly love--
--she cares deeply for this girl--
--this child--
Let me take you home.
--this weapon.

Diary Entry

By Leheran Altion, Head Librarian in the Third Age,
the Library of Prophecies

A young man arrived at the Library today. Only fourteen winters old, he had a particular gift for sight, yet he did not see it as that. A gift. He could not understand what value the images flickering through his mind could be to anyone.

I told him, as I always do, that we are not to know. It will make sense when it makes sense. (If I am honest, more often than not, too late.)

He asked me why we do what we do, and I told him, as I always do, that this is all we have. We can record. We can seek understanding. We can listen to the warnings of destiny and attempt to heed them. That is all we have and all that I do.

Resigned, he shared his sight. [File #2971-2-B] He told the same story I had heard many times before. He sees the four strangers, the same four whom all who visit here see: one of fire, one of fear, one of sand and one of bone. He sees the battle. He sees the White Witch on a white horse, leading an endless army. He sees the Vanir fight back. And he sees the unknowable chaos, followed by inevitable nothing.

So far, his account was much like the others. But then he said something strange.

He said that the chaos laughs. The chaos plays. The chaos is righteous and open and bright.

I was stunned. This does, indeed, suggest that the chaos is a creature, maybe even a sentient one. It suggests that the chaos could be reasoned with.

For the first time since I took this wretched position, I feel hope.

The young man looked relieved to have unburdened himself. Before he left, he asked me, like so many before him, what the point of life is when you know what will happen in the end.

I answered, as I always do--

--that endings are rarely the point of anything.

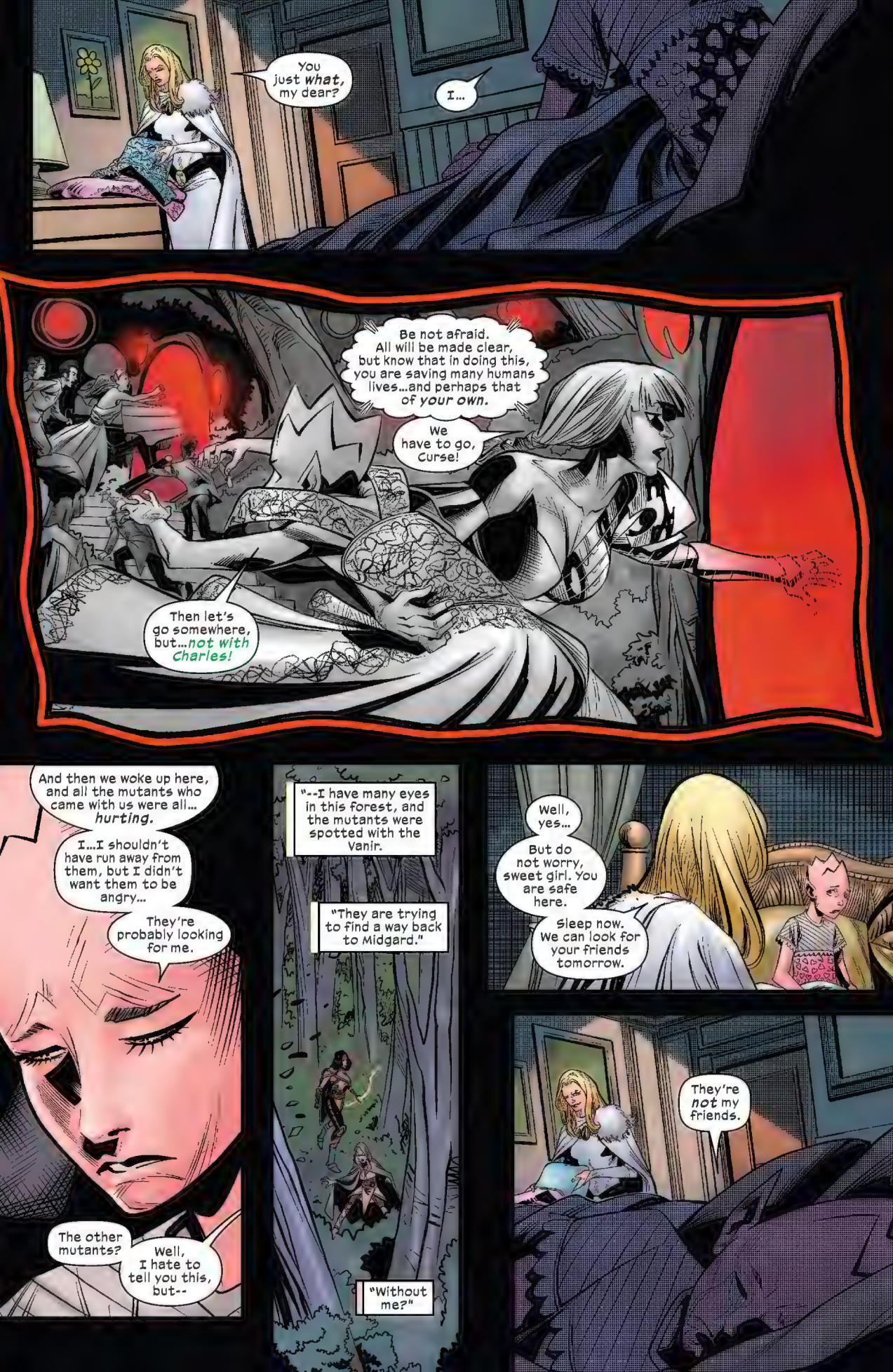
All life ends the same, after all.

They end in death.

Lost Lamb

2

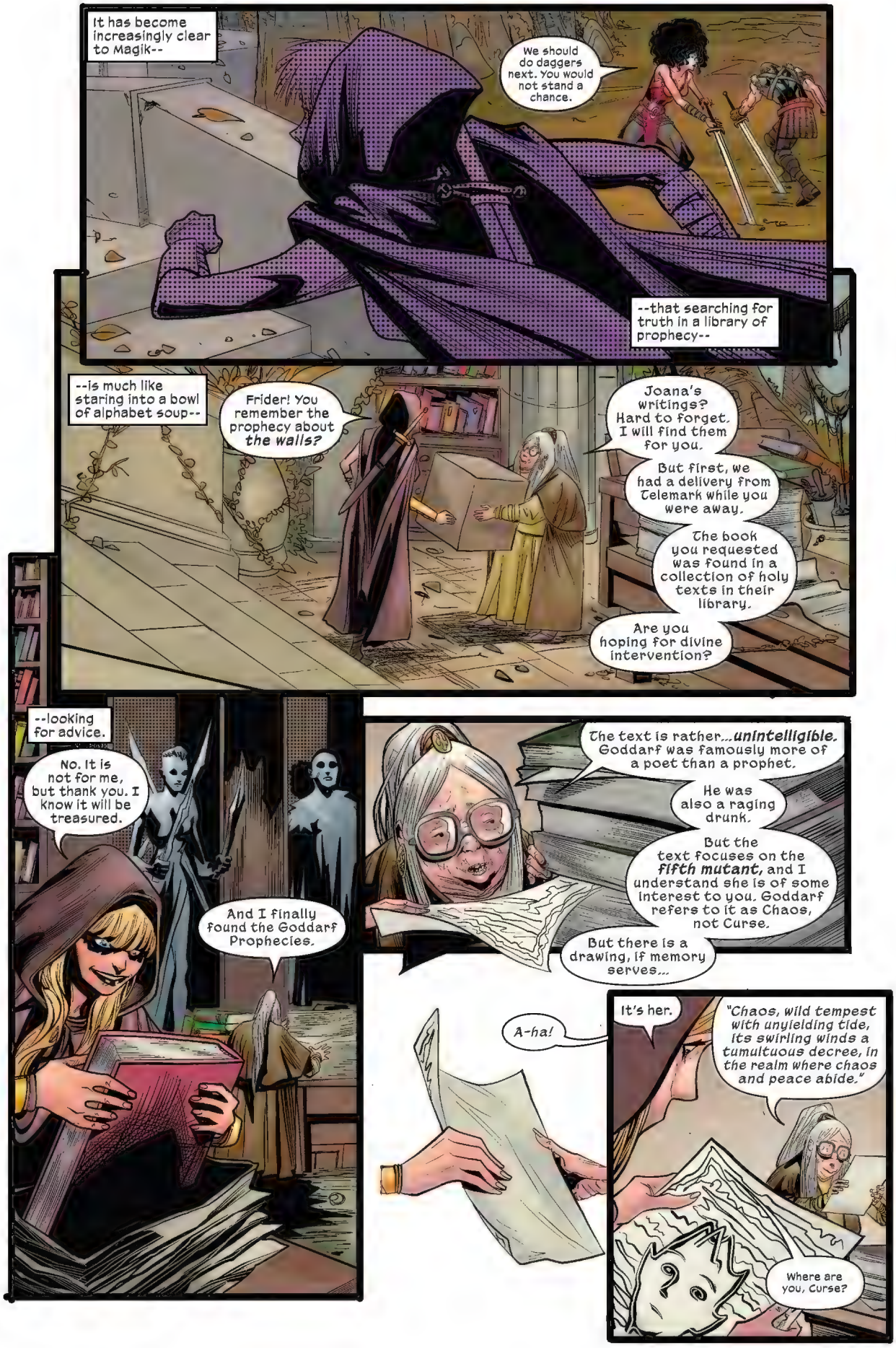
"We were at this Hellfire Gala thing. Well, I wasn't supposed to be there...it's like this party for grownups to, like, dress up and smooch.
"We just snuck in to see what the fuss was about, you know...?
Mutants of Earth, this is Charles Xavier. You must not resist. You must comply. Walk through the closest gate.
"But then...something happened. And Charles Xavier was, like, in our heads, losing it...
"But it's not like the entire thing was, like, my fault...
"Everyone just freaked out and--
Curse! COME ON!
"I didn't want to go through that gate thing.
"I sometimes get...difficult when people tell me what to do.
How much do we love mankind?
Don't be like that, Curse. Come on!
Like what? I don't want to!
"And then Magik dragged me to the gate--
Sometimes you have to do things you don't want to, Curse.
Stop it!
"--and I just got so angry..."
...and it's not like I wanted to hurt her...or any of them...
I just...


You just *what*, my dear?
I...
Be not afraid. All will be made clear, but know that in doing this, you are saving many humans lives...and perhaps that of *your own*.
We have to go, Curse!
Then let's go somewhere, but...*not with Charles!*
And then we woke up here, and all the mutants who came with us were all... *hurting*.
I...I shouldn't have run away from them, but I didn't want them to be angry...
They're probably looking for me.
The other mutants?
Well, I hate to tell you this, but--
"--I have many eyes in this forest, and the mutants were spotted with the Vanir.
"They are trying to find a way back to Midgard."
"Without me?"
Well, yes...
But do not worry, sweet girl. You are safe here.
Sleep now. We can look for your friends tomorrow.
They're *not* my friends.

X weeks later.
Hope is a fickle thing.
The rival of reason--
--it erodes over time.
What do you think, Magik?
Well... I feel sick. Dizzy.
...Scared.
I do not want to be here.
It's not just me, then.
It is a charm of some kind, keeping us away from this place. Subtle but effective.
It is the only magic I've felt in this mystically barren place.
So, if there is magic here, can you...?
Ever hungry--
No. I still can't...focus my magic. Something is siphoning power from the entire realm.
I have even tried drawing from...darker sources, but the flow is blocked.
--it needs nourishment to survive.
How far does the charm reach?
A sign--
The feeling of discomfort intensifies the closer you come to the mountain. And then you hit an invisible wall... It covers the entire citadel. I have not found a way through it.
--an idea--
A wall?
A wall. I think I read something about that...
I'll check the library and see if I can find anything useful.
--a spark of something.
I'll walk you...
I'll be fine! Keep up the search for Curse.
Dani and Marrow should be back today. I'd love to have something for them.
So you can keep going.

The House of Mult.
And keep fighting.
Again.
KLANG
...Again.
KLANG
Mind your elbow!
I bloody well am!
Again.
Typhoid Mary does not feel like she is doing anything wrong.
AAAARRGH!
AGAIN?!
After all, Fisk would hardly mind his wife beating someone up.
MARY!

Even if that *someone* is *sweet*...
Mary, please...I beg you...
Is *that* how you beg, Vonos?
I could make you *beg*.
...and *gentle*.
I do not doubt it. I do not doubt your ability to make me do whatever you want.
But you asked me to help you improve your longsword.
An act of desperation. There is nothing else to do in this godforsaken forest!
I must have been out of my mind.
And strong.
Is that so? Do you want me to go?
And in *awe* of her.
Very well, then.
Again.


It has become increasingly clear to Magik--
We should do daggers next. You would not stand a chance.
--that searching for truth in a library of prophecy--
--is much like staring into a bowl of alphabet soup--
Frider! You remember the prophecy about *the walls?*
Joana's writings? Hard to forget. I will find them for you.
But first, we had a delivery from Telemark while you were away.
The book you requested was found in a collection of holy texts in their library.
Are you hoping for divine intervention?
--looking for advice.
No. It is not for me, but thank you. I know it will be treasured.
And I finally found the Goddarf Prophecies.
The text is rather...*unintelligible.* Goddarf was famously more of a poet than a prophet.
He was also a raging drunk.
But the text focuses on the *fifth mutant,* and I understand she is of some interest to you. Goddarf refers to it as Chaos, not Curse.
But there is a drawing, if memory serves...
A-ha!
It's her.
"Chaos, wild tempest with unyielding tide, its swirling winds a tumultuous decree, in the realm where chaos and peace abide."
Where are you, Curse?

Diary Entry

By Frider Frostborn,
Current Head Librarian at the Library of Prophecy
Six weeks ago

Renowned prophetess Joana Thornwood is visiting the library. She has been here for a fortnight, and we are running out of time. And wine.

We had hoped she would be able to shed light on the question of the fifth stranger, but she seems preoccupied with walls. She has written endless passages about barriers, partitions and the dividers between us -- literally, magically -- and metaphorically.

It falls to me to interpret her prophecies, and I am beginning to wonder if the barrier she is referring to is related to a strange phenomenon reported throughout Vanaheim: We seem to be losing our magic. Could these walls she speaks of somehow disrupt the flow of powers in the realm?

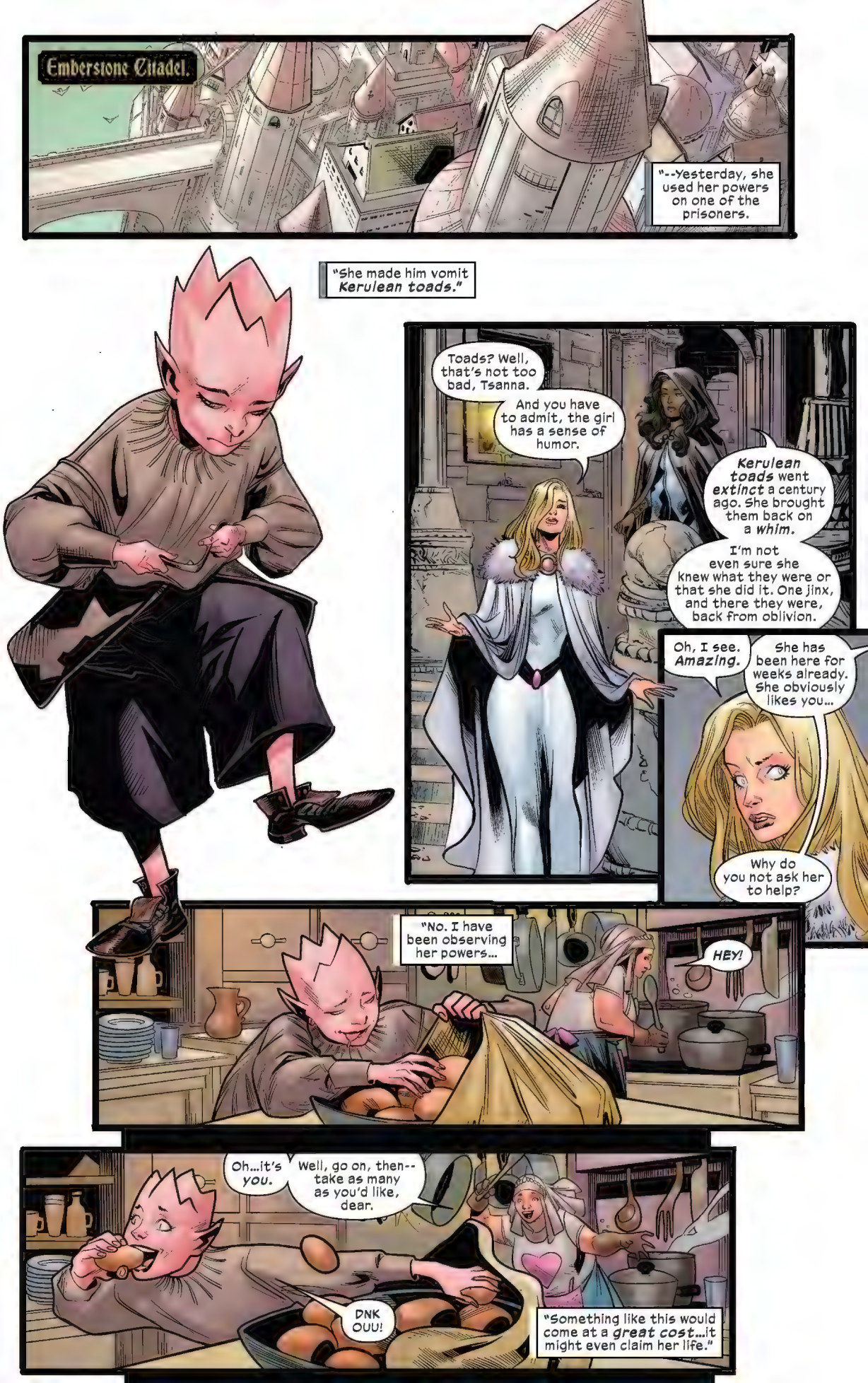
Joana is considered the most accurate soothsayer in Vanaheim, but, as with many of those who offer only truth in their predictions, it is usually only possible to piece together their meaning until after the event has already happened, and by then, it is too late. Finding something of use with the battle mere weeks away feels like a futile exercise.

I am becoming increasingly aware, surrounded by paper and prophecy as I am, that when the war is inevitably upon us, my life's work is over in one way or another. It is difficult to be certain that it has all been worth it in the end.

We have repeatedly offered Joana refuge in the library for the battle, but her answer is always the same:

"I intend to die laughing, upside down, watching the fools dance to the tune of fate's fiddle."

(I do not know what it means.)


Emberstone Citadel.
"--Yesterday, she used her powers on one of the prisoners.
"She made him vomit *Kerulean toads.*"
Toads? Well, that's not too bad, Tsanna.
And you have to admit, the girl has a sense of humor.
Kerulean toads went *extinct* a century ago. She brought them back on a *whim.*
I'm not even sure she knew what they were or that she did it. One jinx, and there they were, back from oblivion.
Oh, I see. *Amazing.*
She has been here for weeks already. She obviously likes you...
Why do you not ask her to help?
"No. I have been observing her powers...
HEY!
Oh...it's *you.*
Well, go on, then--take as many as you'd like, dear.
DNK OUU!
"Something like this would come at a *great cost*...it might even claim her life."

It must be *her* idea. She must want to help us. She must want to do it more than anything, or I fear her power will fail.
But I do think it is time to plant the idea in her mind.
My queen!
Are we ready to try *again?*
Twenty-third time's a charm.
Yes!
We have to keep trying, Tsanna.
NMIX NMIX NMIX!
...Awesome.
NMIX NMIX NMIX!

Good morning, Curse.
Good... What...what is that thing?
It is our *salvation*--
--if we could but get to it.
What does that mean?
It is an ancient power source.
The citadel was built around it. It is how the Vanir of old powered the gates and trading routes to other realms back in the day.
It brought Vanaheim to the universe and the universe to Vanaheim.
But when the Vanir left their cities, they hid it.
Hid it? It's right there!
It was too powerful to be destroyed, so they used its power to hide it in another dimension. We are looking at it through a one-way portal to, well, *somewhere...*
So *weird!*
Yes...*weird.* And *frustrating.*
Limitless power--right there, yet not there at all. We need to bring it back, but we are running out of time.
Without it, we do not stand a chance in the coming war.
It is not quite a lie--

--but not the entire truth either.
That's the place...
I suppose we could try just walking through the front gates...?
You'd be dead in a second.
Bounty hunters.
Is that so? I don't see why. We have no enemies here.
You do not understand Vanaheim, do you?
You know, when Vanir children turn one, we celebrate a ceremony called Verus.
A sibyl will look into the child's life and provide three insights into their future.
It is considered the most formative part of life in this realm.
But the last few years, the sibyls have seen nothing but a haze of clouds.
A generation of Vanir children growing up in the dark.
Because of you.
It has been a frustrating few weeks.
And in this moment--
I repeat: We do not want any trouble.
Rightfully or not, many here blame you for what's to come.
--Dani Moonstar does not speak for Marrow.
After weeks of walking through this war-torn land--
So, yes, in a way, this is personal.
But there is also a massive price on your heads.
Dead or alive. Your choice, girlies.
--she is aching for a fight.

And she decides--
Tonight, when every breath you take is torment--
--when you regret every pathetic step that brought you to this miserable fight--
Sarah... don't...
--they will do.
Get them!
--remember-- this was on you.
Dammit.

Mirage and Marrow choose mercy.
(Of sorts.)
KRAK
Dani Moonstar's arrow does not hurt the body--
--but it traps the mind in its own nightmares.
What do you say? Still want to kill the girlies?
Sarah!

Dani! Sarah! What happened?
Bounty hunters. Apparently, there's a price on our heads.
We were looking for a way in... but--
THWAK
You want to infiltrate the citadel?
Want is a strong word. But we have exhausted every other possibility.
There is supposed to be a connection to the World Tree in the citadel. Maybe even a port with functioning ships...
It's our last resort, but we're not getting through that entrance without an army.
I have been probing the perimeter of the wall surrounding the citadel. There is a hidden gate on the east side. The raiders use it to enter Vanir territory.
It is protected by a magical wall, but there are weaknesses. I think we can get through.
Are you still searching the forest for Curse?
Every day. I can cover more ground than Illyana, and she would be out here if I were not.
Personally, I am convinced Curse is in the citadel. It is the only place we have not searched.
Magik still blames herself?
Yes.
She has been taking care of the wounded and poring over books in the library.
To tell you the truth, I am worried about her. This realm is doing something to her magic, and her powers are still lost. She seems lost without them.
What of Typhoid Mary?

Later. The House of Mult.
"Well, Mary is Mary still."
You've been gone for weeks--
--you return with NOTHING--
SLAM
That's not fair, Mary.
We have not rested. We have tried every portal, every ship, every key and spell. We are trapped here.
Whatever is cutting Vanaheim off from the rest of the realms is doing a thorough job.
What about Asgard? Aren't you, like, old friends?
Our messages go unanswered.
Either Asgard is involved somehow, or we're not getting through.
I want.
To go.
Home.
Our last resort is trying to get into the citadel itself.
I will pledge my unyielding allegiance to the White Witch if she can get us out of this godforsaken mud pit.
You would not say that if you'd seen what we have seen, Mary.

Well, I haven't seen anything, have I, because I've been stuck here with Wannabe Legolas and Little Miss Powerless like some glorified babysitter!
All of our people are fully recovered now. The prophesied battle is only a day away...If we could get them out of here before the war--
It's worth a try.
I say we go--
Well, you're not going at any rate.
I--
Face it, Magik.
You can't pull your weight in a fight.
It's unfair for the rest of us if you go.
Nothing hurts like the truth.
For ♦#&%# sake, Mary.
You have the sensibility of a dump truck.
No...it's okay. She is right. You go.
Find Curse. Find a way to get the others to safety.

Thor Odinson, All-Father and King of Asgard,

We are unsure if you have received our previous communications, but we take the liberty of asking for your assistance once more.

Our realm is in peril. The one who calls herself the White Witch has taken up residence in Emberstone Citadel. She is rebuilding the structure we abandoned eons ago and, along with it, we fear, the weapons and war machines that the Vanir once forged. Despite our renewed attempts at peaceful negotiations, diplomacy has proven unsuccessful.

If the potential destruction of Vanaheim, your long-standing ally, fails to spur your forces into action, perhaps the notion of an unknown adversary armed with ancient Vanir weaponry will. Should you need a reminder of the devastation they are capable of, we urge you to consult your own historical records. Know that there is no reason to believe this sorceress will confine her campaign of violence to our realm.

We are prepared and willing to fight. We are fully ready for the conflicts that lie ahead. Yet the future is most uncertain, and when we consult it, we see nothing but darkness.

We implore you to assist us, and if that is not feasible, we request a response. Your silence in this matter is difficult to interpret as anything other than an act of aggression.

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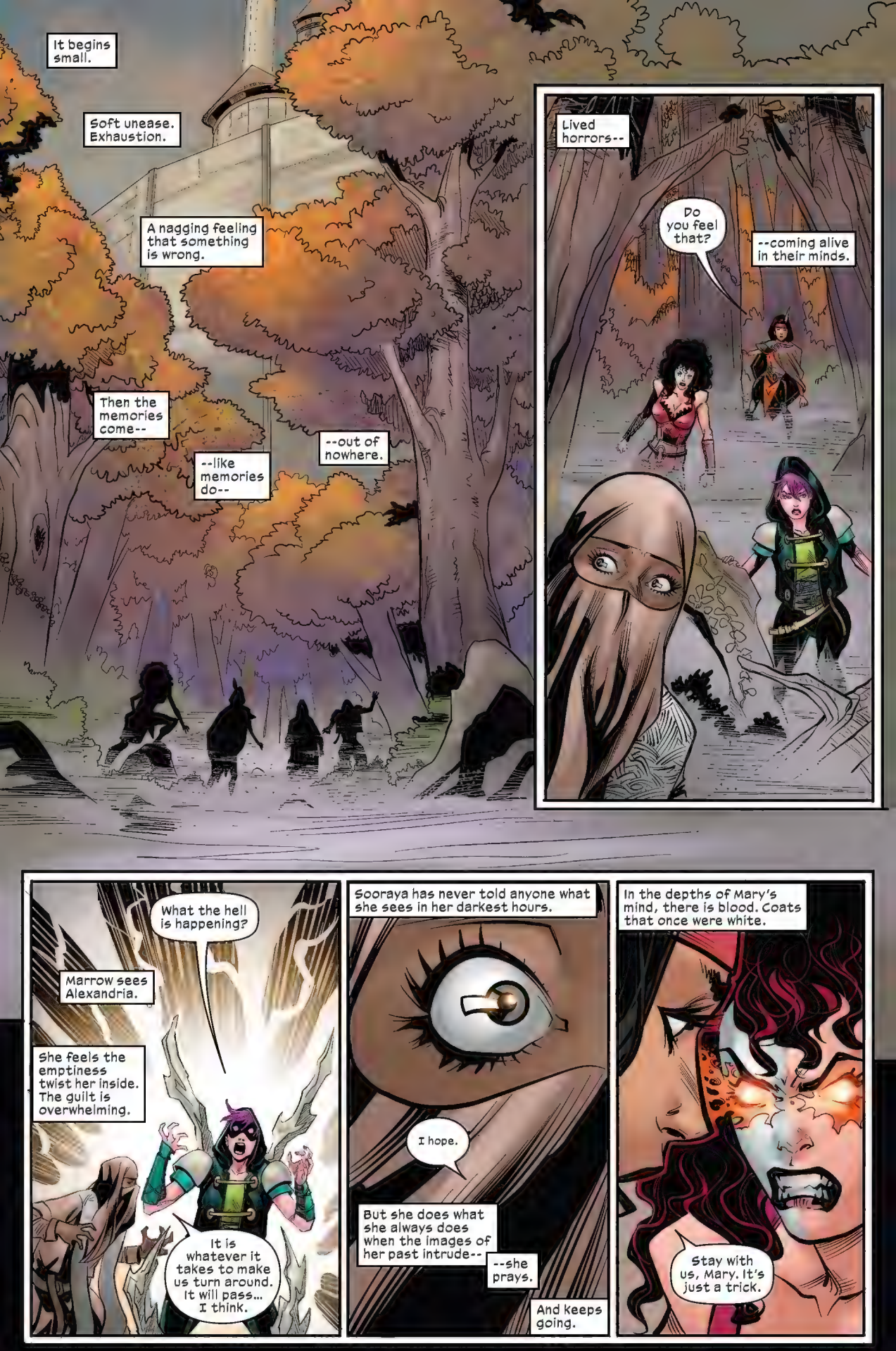
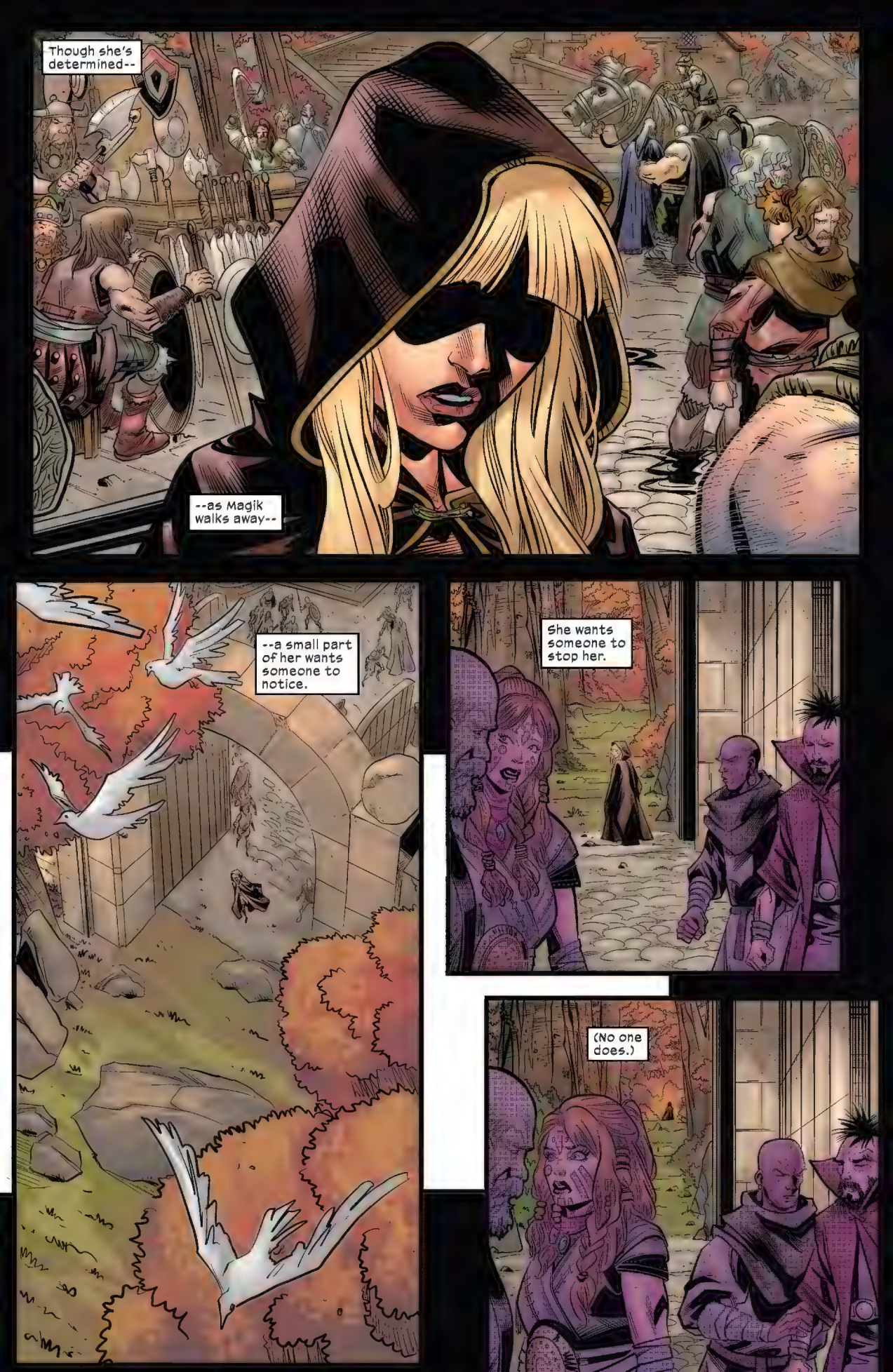
Commander Trabin of the House of Mult,
Vanaheim

There are ways to change fate. But that is not what you want, is it, Saturnyne?
You want to control it. And that, sweet, cruel queen, is beyond you.
What a bore you are, Joana.
There is a theory that the only way to change one's fate is to give something up.
Not a symbolic thing. Destiny cares little for gestures.
But truly go against your nature. Give your very self up and see what grace you will find.
But you will not give up anything, will you?
So you try to control the game of fate--
--without knowing the rules.
And without understanding that we all play a part in what's to come.
You are not going to let this old hag get to you, my queen?
If I cannot change the prophecy, why act at all? Why not sit back and wait?
You can try to outsmart your destiny if you like. See where it gets you.
The mutants are here. I can feel them walking through the charmed forest.
They have come for their lost lamb.
Well?
What will you do, Saturnyne? Are you going to fight?


It begins small.
Soft unease. Exhaustion.
A nagging feeling that something is wrong.
Then the memories come--
--like memories do--
--out of nowhere.
Lived horrors--
Do you feel that?
--coming alive in their minds.
What the hell is happening?
Marrow sees Alexandria.
She feels the emptiness twist her inside. The guilt is overwhelming.
It is whatever it takes to make us turn around. It will pass... I think.
Sooraya has never told anyone what she sees in her darkest hours.
I hope.
But she does what she always does when the images of her past intrude--
--she prays.
And keeps going.
In the depths of Mary's mind, there is blood. Coats that once were white.
Stay with us, Mary. It's just a trick.

Had Magik been with them, she could have told them who was watching their memories.
Through here.
After you.
She would have understood what they were *giving away* as they walked through the shield of magic.
Bloody hell.
She would have understood who they just let into their minds.
But Illyana is driven by her own fears--
This has been her all along?
Is that...?
Screaming.

--complex and all-consuming--
MARY
MARROW
DANI
SOOFAYA
--they are not of pain and death.
For a moment, she wonders if there is another way.
Are you going to let this fraud change your mind?
No. We find them. We kill them.
If this is playing into the hands of destiny.
But let us summon some help.
That's it, Saturnyne. Death begets death. War begets war.
But this is how it was always going to be.


Though she's determined--
--as Magik walks away--
--a small part of her wants someone to notice.
She wants someone to stop her.
(No one does.)

First Spilled Blood

3

Of all the ways one can welcome *intruders* to one's land--
--*Saturnyne* chooses *violence.*
Her army is in wait far beyond the ten realms.
(But such details do not hold her back.)
As the fabric of the universe tears--
--as her soldiers travel through dimensions and time--
--the world *screams.*
The sound is hollow and deep--
--it is the trill of despair--
--of trees weeping--
--of stones shattering--
--of the winds gasping for air.

The sound reaches far.
WHAT THE HELL IS THAT?
It feels like the world is breaking!
There! Look at the sky!
Far in the distance, they see the ships coming through the tear in the sky.
But then reality *fights back*--
Hrrk--
Hrrk--
--and the power it takes to keep the rip open is too much--
--even for Saturnyne.

But she did not pick Vanaheim for its beauty.
Deep in the citadel, there is enough power to rent time and space itself.
Only one zzzhip and you could not get that through without losses.
We are waiting, Zzaturnyne.
Thizzz is not good enough.
The power source will be activated in time. You will all get through.
If she could but get to it.
But right now we have more pressing concerns. One of my boundary charms has been activated-- we have four intruders within the citadel.
Kill them.
Very well, Queen.
We need the source, Your Grace. You need to talk to Curse.
Don't worry, Tsanna. I have other alternatives if the little brat proves uncooperative.
You do not mean--
I do.
We're so close, Tsanna. If the Vanir wish to test my resolve, I'm happy to show them the extent of it.
The mutants got in through the back gate. Double the defenses around the citadel. This might be some pathetic attempt to distract us.
Yes, my Queen. What will you do?
I'm going to catch a storm.

It was always a long shot.
To find a way home.
They went there to find Curse.
What are they?
Hell if I know, but I think they're here for us.
If we attack them, there will be no hope for diplomacy.
FIRE AT WILL!
I don't think they're interested in diplomacy, Dani.
I agree... but I think we owe it to the others to--
KA-BOOM
Maybe even find a way to peace.
THWACK
HEYYY!
ARGHH, YOU BLOODY ALIEN BASTARDS!
Never mind.
(But it was always a long shot.)

Mirage uses her powers to search for the *fears* of their enemy.
They do not have a word for it in their language.
(The fearful among them do not survive their training.)
I got the one on the left.
The only *desires* she can see in them--
--are the deaths of their enemies.
(And that is not something the mutants intend to grant them.)
Dust breaks their arrows before they find their target.
Mary plays with the ones that get through.
Is that really the best you can do?

Marrow lets her anger out.
The storm! Protect yourself.
Sand is the least of your problems!
KRSSSH
But the sky is dark with the shadows of their enemies.
There are too many.
I can do this all day, Marrow.
Is that...is that *her? The Witch?*
No... that's...

And then they see her.
SATURNYNE?!
The Witch watches them run.
FLICK!
My wind for yours, Dust.
She feels them as they move through the invisible walls surrounding her domain.
Who gives a ‡#%& who she is?!
It matters because--
--whatever we thought this fight was--
Saturnyne's magic tears through the storm, splitting it to pieces.
(She knows what power lies in the congregation.)
And deep inside, Sooraya hurts.
--we were wrong.

AGH! YOU BLOODY--
What is that, Commander Trabin?
Arm yourself, Vonos.
When Trabin was but a boy, the sibyl who performed his Verus gave him the moniker *First Blood.*
As a young soldier, he earned his name time and time again.
AAARRRGHHH!
HALT!
Always at the front line with his men. Always first in battle.
The name followed him through the years. Proudly spoken by those who served under him.
SHUNK
HRFF!
Do you yield?
But he always knew--
--he had always known-- what it meant.

SHUNK
First blood.
Never.
NOOOO!
The beginning of the war.
The beginning of the end.
No! No, no, no! Crabin...
Look at me.
Good boy. Now aim your crossbow at your head. And--
--pull the trigger.
Dust! What's wrong? Dust!
Saturnyne... she...she took something.
She took a piece of me.

The Fate of Vanaheim

Annotated by Frider Frostborn,
Current head Librarian at the Library of Prophecy.

In the fourth age of Vanaheim, behold the coming storm,
A battle fierce and deadly, where destinies will transform.

Between the light's pure radiance and shadows that encroach,
Four strangers shall arise, destiny they'll approach.

Fire, Sand, Fear and Bone. This confirms previous prophecies. Suggests some magical powers.

One of Fire, fierce and bold, a burning heart untamed,
Guiding flames of passion, in their name, a love reclaimed.

One of Sand, grounded deep, wisdom in their core,
Through the shifting sands of fate, they'll fight and they'll explore.

One of Fear, with courage clear, shall face the darkest night,
Conquering dread with valor, as stars embrace their light. Poetic drivel.

One of Bone, with ancient grace, shall bridge the realms of old,
In bones and spirits' whispers, fury shall unfold.

The suggestion is, once again, that the hidden power is a person.

But lo, a fifth stranger, in shadows yet unknown,
Their power hidden, to everyone but the throne.

References to the Witch.

From the great unknown, an endless army is unchained,
They march to rend the realm, for those who wish to reign.

Born of shadows deep, they emerge from the abyss,
Infinite in number, this threat we can't dismiss.

To drain the realm of life, to seize its very core,
In their relentless march, dark days we can't ignore.

Will the person, the fifth stranger, make a choice?

Beneath the depths of mind, a choice concealed from view,
Shall shape the realm's destiny, the old and new to construe.

In the balance of this choice, the world shall be remade,
What lies beyond, we cannot know, the future hides in shade.

House of Mult.
The Vanir mourn their leader.
Soldiers' grief surrounds them.
It is quiet and hard.
Magik is gone. Mary is drinking. Dani is screaming at the gods and you're praying to yours.
We're not doing great, are we?
With hardship comes ease, Sarah.
I am grateful we are here. I am grateful we are together.
Tears suffocated by the weight of war.
The forest seems to grieve with them.
Sif...
Sif?!
Is there something keeping your eyes from us?
Dani's voice pierces through the silence of the trees.
Or are you watching?
Are you watching us die?
Loud enough to reach the gods.
This is not a war. It is extermination.
It is the death of a branch of your precious World Tree, and you do nothing?
Is this suffering beneath the attention of Asgard?
But if they can hear her--
--they do not answer.

In this pivotal hour, I have entrusted the role of second in command to Captain Vonos. A sense of peace envelops me, a conviction that this choice is the correct one. I have told him all he needs to know. The rest I take to my grave. Preparations for the impending war proceed apace with one glaring exception: the scarcity of rations.

Not since the great flood of the second age have Vanaheim's fertile fields yielded so meagerly. The harvest withers beneath the soil. The once-rich earth has grown desolate, as if plagued by some malignant illness. Autumn is already here. We march under trees of yellows and reds. It would be beautiful if it were not so wrong. The roots rot.

The ground is barren. I bear the weight of 200,000 souls under my command, yet I cannot feed them. The battle looms on the horizon, and I stand already disadvantaged. We cannot use our sorcerers. We cannot trust the soil. It feels like war has already begun.

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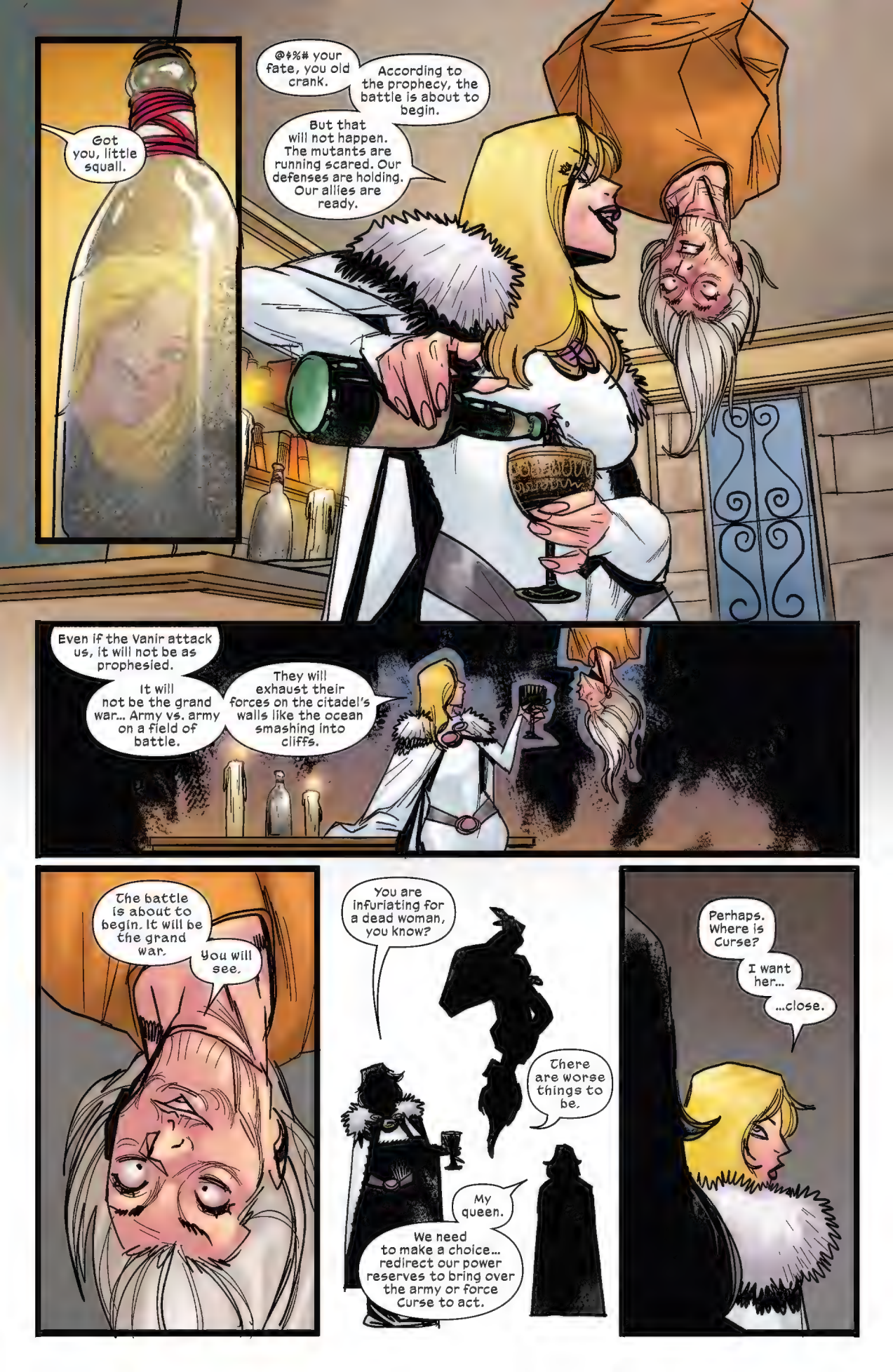
Commander Trabin of the House of Mult,
Vanaheim


Got you, little squall.
@$%# your fate, you old crank.
According to the prophecy, the battle is about to begin.
But that will not happen. The mutants are running scared. Our defenses are holding. Our allies are ready.
Even if the Vanir attack us, it will not be as prophesied.
It will not be the grand war... Army vs. army on a field of battle.
They will exhaust their forces on the citadel's walls like the ocean smashing into cliffs.
The battle is about to begin. It will be the grand war.
You will see.
You are infuriating for a dead woman, you know?
There are worse things to be.
My queen.
We need to make a choice... redirect our power reserves to bring over the army or force Curse to act.
Perhaps. Where is Curse?
I want her...
...close.

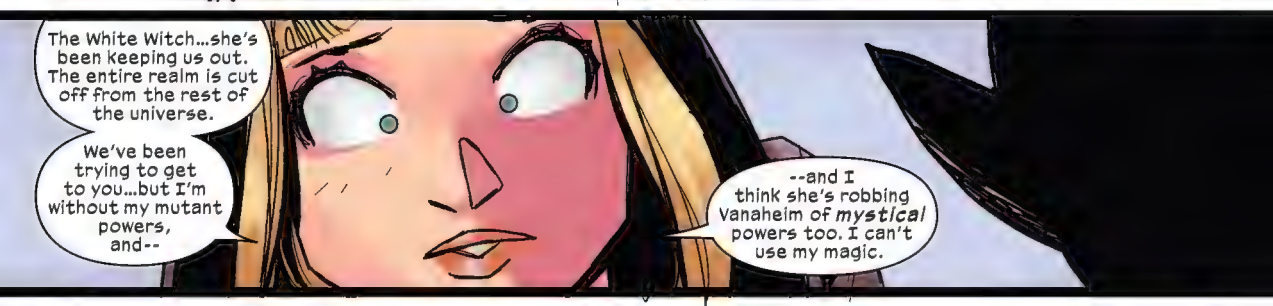
Emberstone Citadel, main entrance.
At the same time.
The citadel is teeming with life.
In between the recruits for Saturnyne's army--
--and prisoners for her dungeon--
--no one pays Magik any mind.
Much as I enjoy the occasional bloodbath--
--it does come with a lot of cleanups.
So I repeat--
--do not enter through the gates armed!
It will detect weapons, spells, wands, enchantments and magical artifacts.
If you're in doubt about possessing any of these items, please contact one of the guards.
WANTED
I heard that one breathes fire.
HMPH--
Only when she's angry.
You are welcome to seek shelter in the citadel, provided you're ready to swear your allegiance to our queen.

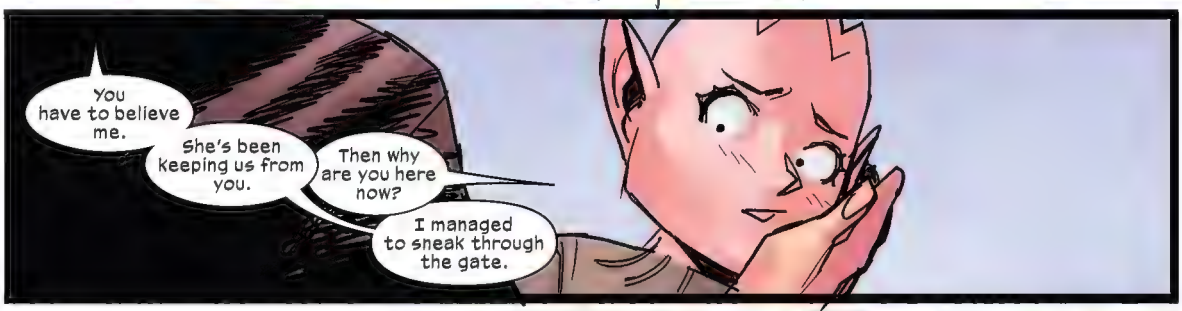
I repeat.
Do not... DO NOT enter the gate if you carry a wea--
AARARGHHH!
The amulet... it was my mother's--
AAAH!
Why do I bother?
GUARDS!
Nooo! I didn't know! I didn't--

Magik cannot be sure her powers are undetectable as well as inaccessible.
Keep moving!
But she has come too far to stop now.
Part of her wants the gate to see something in her.
Tease out her old self since she seems unable to do so on her own.
But it finds nothing.
Recruit or vendor?
The screams of torture blend with the sound of something else.
RECRUIT OR VENDOR?
Me? Ehh...
Recruit.
Oh, for--! She's back at it. SHIELD YOUR HEADS!
Somewhere above them--
--there is laughter.
Damned clay pigeons! How are we supposed to work like this?
If I ever get my hands on that little--
Curse?

Magik follows the sound of joy--
PULL!
--and mischief.
Curse?
Very good, Lady Curse!
Curse! Oh, thank the gods...
Magik?!
What are *you* doing here?
I came for you, of course.
Oh? Took you long enough.

Magik faces her greatest challenge yet--
--talking sense to a teenager.
You left me!
We looked for you every day.
We looked everywhere.
I've been right here all along!

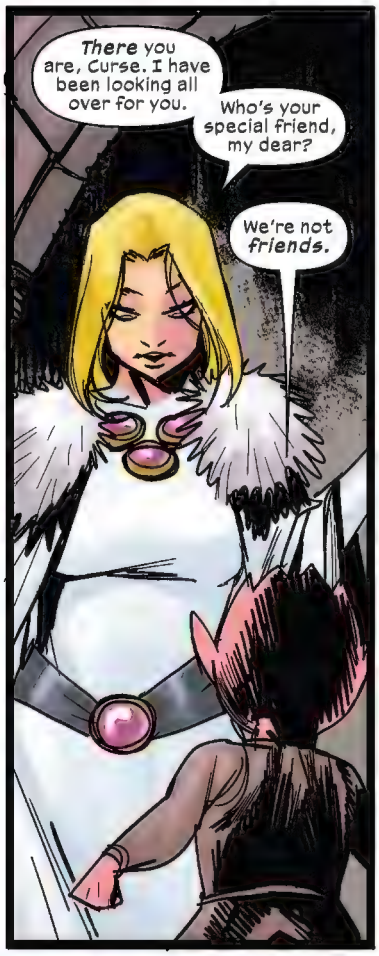

The White Witch...she's been keeping us out. The entire realm is cut off from the rest of the universe.
We've been trying to get to you...but I'm without my mutant powers, and--
--and I think she's robbing Vanaheim of mystical powers too. I can't use my magic.

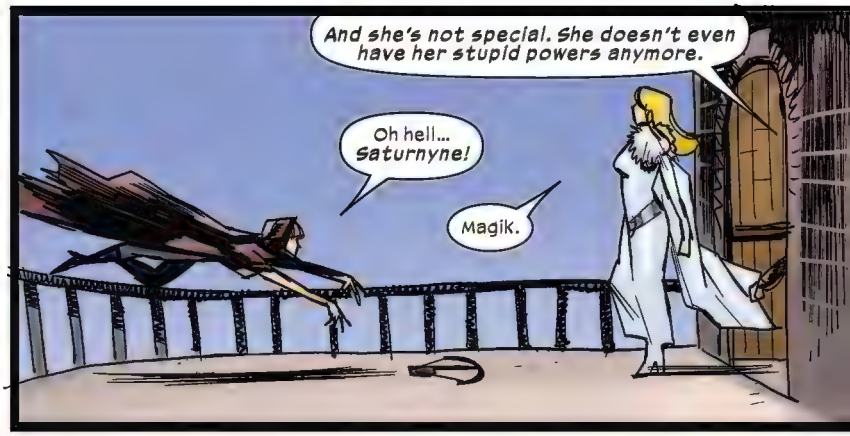

You have to believe me.
She's been keeping us from you.
Then why are you here now?
I managed to sneak through the gate.

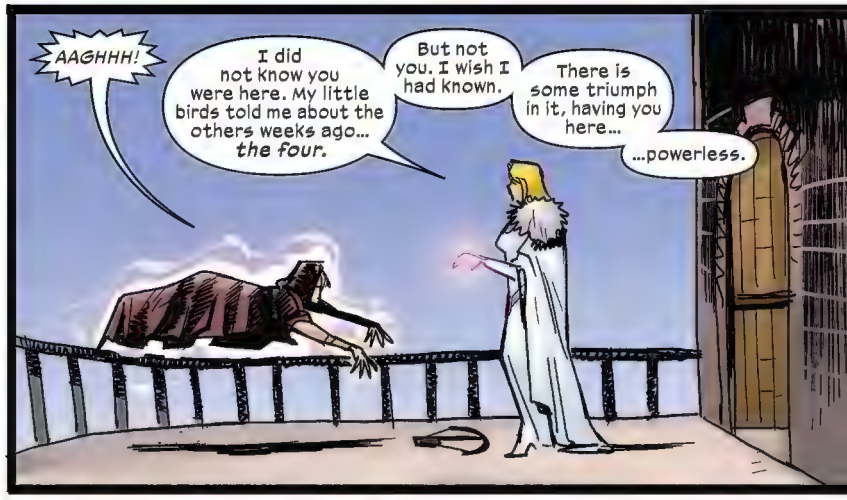
Curse...you must see that she's not a good person... They're torturing people as entertainment down there.
They're torturing traitors.
You can tell a lot about someone in how they treat their prisoners.

Cool. That's your opinion. Well, thanks for coming. See you around.
Please... come back with me. See the others. They're all waiting for you!
I have been young and alone.
I know how easy it can be to cling to whatever kindness you happen to find.

But know that whatever you've done or whatever you do, you can always come home to us.
We're your family. You can come home anytime you want. Always.
Whatever. I'm late for dinner.


There you are, Curse. I have been looking all over for you.
Who's your special friend, my dear?
We're not friends.


And she's not special. She doesn't even have her stupid powers anymore.
Oh hell... Saturnyne!
Magik.


AAGHHH!
I did not know you were here. My little birds told me about the others weeks ago... the four.
But not you. I wish I had known.
There is some triumph in it, having you here...
...powerless.

Agrh...what... what are you doing here?
I am creating something new. A new realm. A new home. A new...center of operations.
Is it not a lovely place for it?

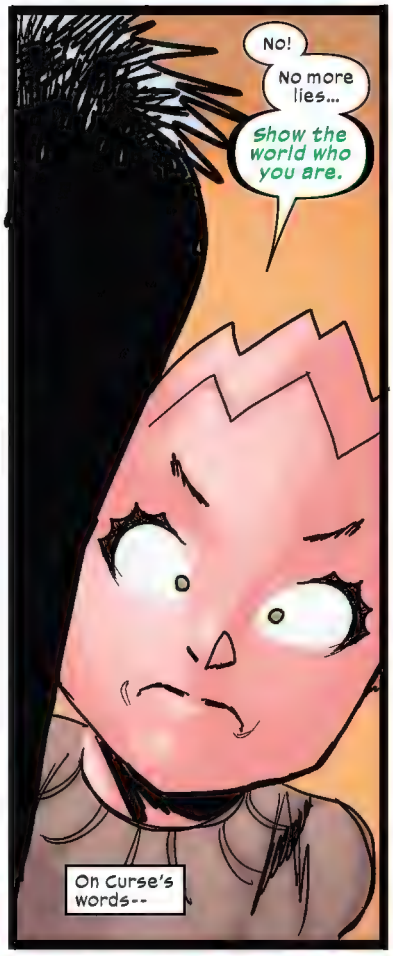
You're draining the realm of power. You're draining it of its very nature!
How long do you think Vanaheim will survive? How long before the woods and the winds change?
Sacrifices must be made, Magik.

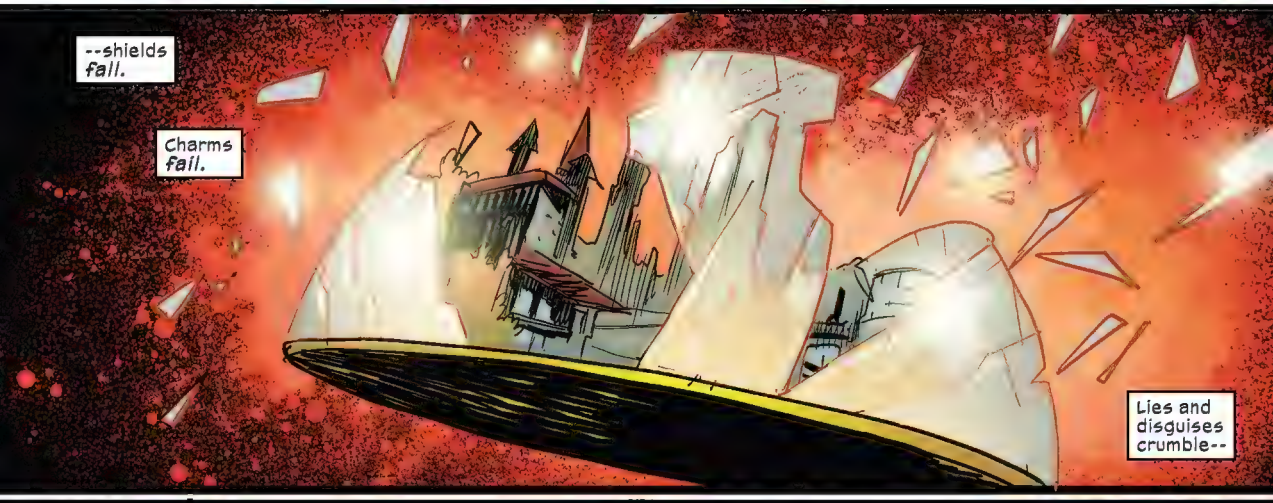
But do not worry yourself about it. You will not be here for it.
Tell me...
...how is it...being ordinary?
Saturnyne would never admit it, but Magik has a point.

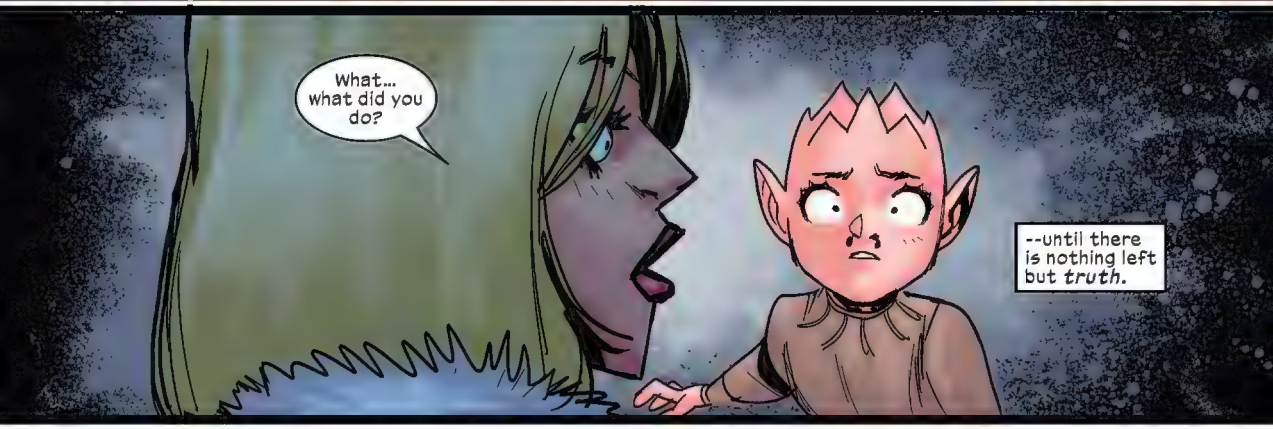
AAAAAAEEEE!
Never mind. It hardly matters.
The only way to save Vanaheim from destruction is to unlock the power source lurking deep below them.
And for that she needs Curse.
Is she right?
Have you been keeping them from me?!
Mmm...
Do you believe *her* over me?
Are they here?! Were they looking for me all this time?
Last I checked, they were looking for ways to get back to Midgard, not looking for *you*.
Don't lie to me!

I'm not, sweetheart! And don't raise your voice at me.
You are! You said they weren't looking for me! What else are you lying about?
What is this, Curse? I took you in, remember? When nobody else wanted you.

Are you keeping Vanaheim from the rest of the worlds? Are we trapped here? Is this your doing? Are they really traitors? The prisoners?
So many questions. I think what you need is a nap and a meal, my dear.


No!
No more lies...
Show the world who you are.
On Curse's words--


--shields fall.
Charms fail.
Lies and disguises crumble--


What... what did you do?
--until there is nothing left but truth.

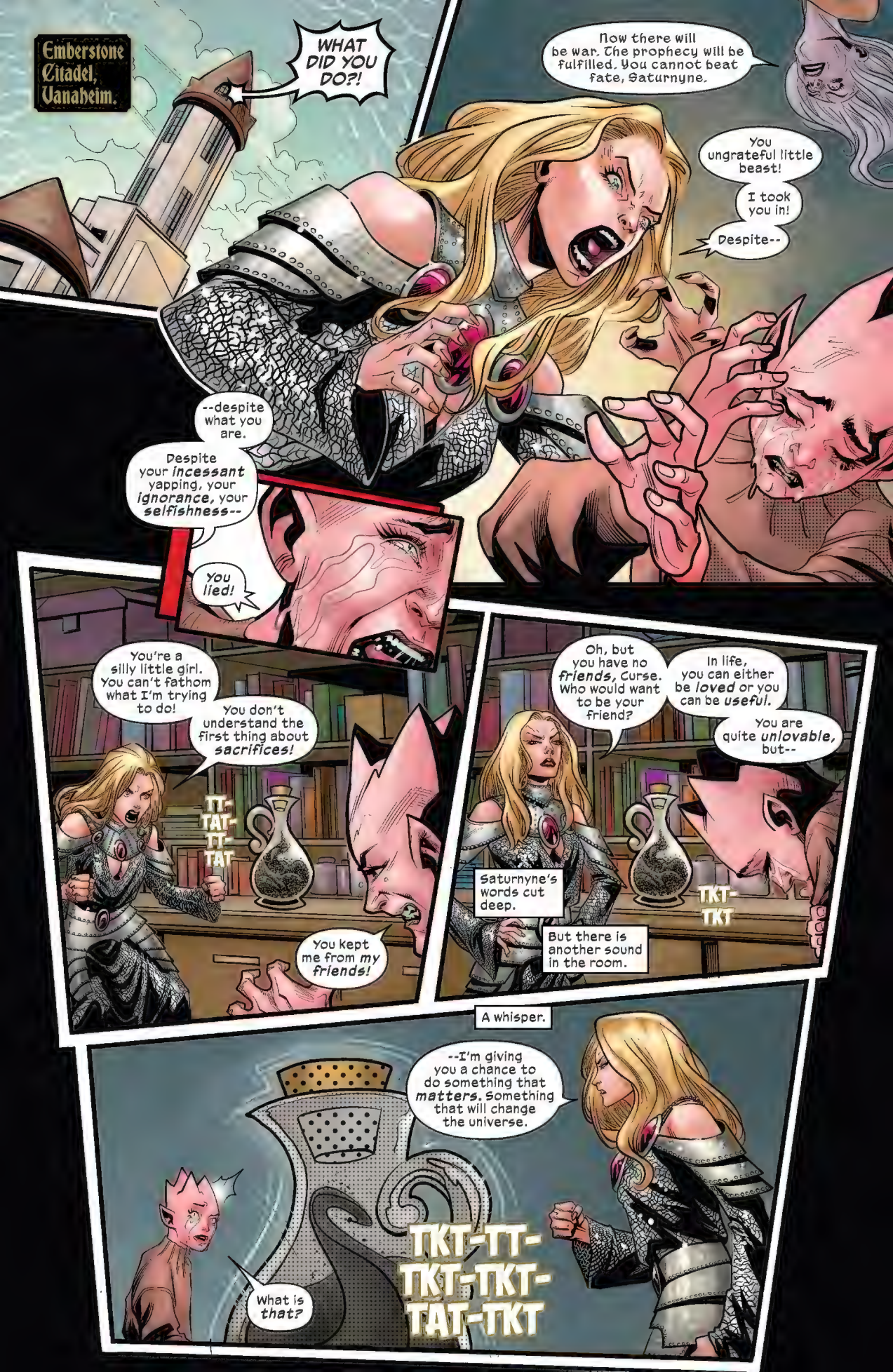
Moments before.
As she falls to her death, Magik tries to remember a moment in time.
A memory she has worked hard to forget.
"My little snowflake.
"There are so many kinds of powers.
"Yet you reach for the obvious."
You reach for the magic in the wind and earth--
--you try to summon chaos--
I...I CAN'T DO IT, BELASCO! IT... BURNS!
Well, yes... but it is the only way.
There is magic in despair.
There is magic in words that hurt more than blades.
In the echoes of screams of pain--
--in fallen tears--
--in cold sweat--
--there is power in the misery of the world.
Use it.
(She remembers.)

SH

The Promised Day

4

In Asgard, Sif sees all.
Every moment of every life.
She sees the joy, the grief, the love and the betrayals.
But it is what the All-Seer did not see that strikes fear in her heart.
It takes extraordinary powers to hide from Sif's sight.
(Saturnyne is extraordinary, after all.)
But on Curse's jinx, her magic fails.
The invisible walls that were hiding Vanaheim crumble, and Sif can see the realm once more.
WHAT DID YOU DO?!
She calls her king when she sees the fury of the witch.
And she feels her heart fall when she sees the one they call Magik summon powers best left alone.
What is it, All-Seer?
Because she knows this means--
War, my king.


Emberstone Citadel, Vanaheim.
WHAT DID YOU DO?!
Now there will be war. The prophecy will be fulfilled. You cannot beat fate, Saturnyne.
You ungrateful little beast!
I took you in!
Despite--
--despite what you are.
Despite your *incessant* yapping, your *ignorance*, your *selfishness*--
You lied!
You're a silly little girl. You can't fathom what I'm trying to do!
You don't understand the first thing about *sacrifices!*
TT-TAT-TT-TAT
You kept me from *my friends!*
Oh, but you have no *friends*, Curse. Who would want to be your friend?
In life, you can either be *loved* or you can be *useful*.
You are quite *unlovable*, but--
Saturnyne's words cut deep.
But there is another sound in the room.
TKT-TKT
A whisper.
--I'm giving you a chance to do something that *matters*. Something that will change the universe.
What is *that?*
TKT-TT-TKT-TKT-TAT-TKT

The whisper turns into a voice.
What is...?
Don't touch that!
TKT-TT-TKT-TKT-TKT
Is that...? Is that *Dust?*
She knows it.
She knows *her.*
And *Dust* tells her to--
...Dust?
--run.
AGGHH!

Vanaheim is magically bankrupt. The only power left to use is that of suffering.
It is dark magic.
She can smell it.
Touch it.
Like a tangible thing.
It would be easy to lose oneself in this.
All this anger and pain.
But in the choir of misery, one voice outsings all--
Curse.

We'll find Curse!
Later!
Don't we need her for--?
We're no longer fighting the Vanir--we're fighting the universe.
The enemy is at our doorstep. More will come.
We need to get the army here.
But without the source--
Without the source, we will bleed the realm dry.
No matter.
I have no need for forests.
But there is a lot of power in a dying world.

We have tried everything to return the power source to Vanaheim, to no avail. The failure burns in my heart. The patience of our queen has come to an end, and she has decided to draw power from the realm -- from Vanaheim -- instead.

The queen seems to believe that standing on dying ground might be enough to convince Curse to act -- to use her strange powers to bring us the source -- but only a fool would rely on the selflessness of a child. Especially that child.

In my heart, I grieve. I grieve for the Vanir, too stubborn to accept what Saturnyne offers. I grieve for the beauty of the world and the innocence that walks upon it. I grieve for the trees that will burn and the mountains that will crumble.

But I have seen Saturnyne's vision. I know her heart. I know the sacrifice will be worth it in the end.

All great empires are built on blood and ash. In a few years, when our queen rules Vanaheim as the center of the joined universes, as it was always meant to be, and when knowledge and resources are traded across dimensions and time, we will not dwell on the loss of today.

But for now, war is upon us. May Saturnyne have mercy on their souls.

Tsanna, diary entry #231

The Vanir Front, seconds before.
It is a stolen moment.
I wanted to say...
...if I die today, I feel lucky to have met you.
To have known you.
You don't know me, Vonos.
There is no world around them--
--there is no war--
Sure I do, Mary.
You don't know the first thing--
--no battle. No prophecy.
Only his touch and her lips.
Sure I do, Mary.
I would beg you not to fight, but I know you will.
How do you know?
And when the world returns--
RUUUMBBLEEE
--it bleeds.

Life is drained from the world.
This is it.
The forest screams as the trees die--
Don't just stand there, Dani!
Do something!
Nice to see you, Mary!
--the wind whimpers--
GRAAR
--and fate laughs.

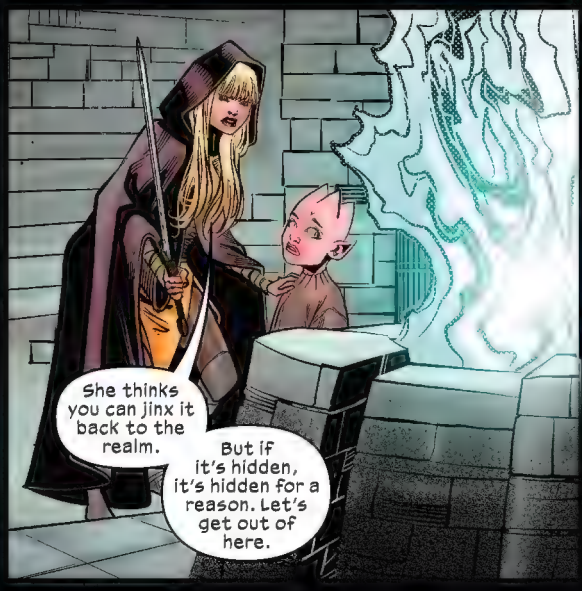
Curse! We know you're in here! Come out and play, you little @%&%!
We can finally kill the little br--

ZRRRRCK
The source glitters in silence.
The only sound in the room is that of melting flesh.

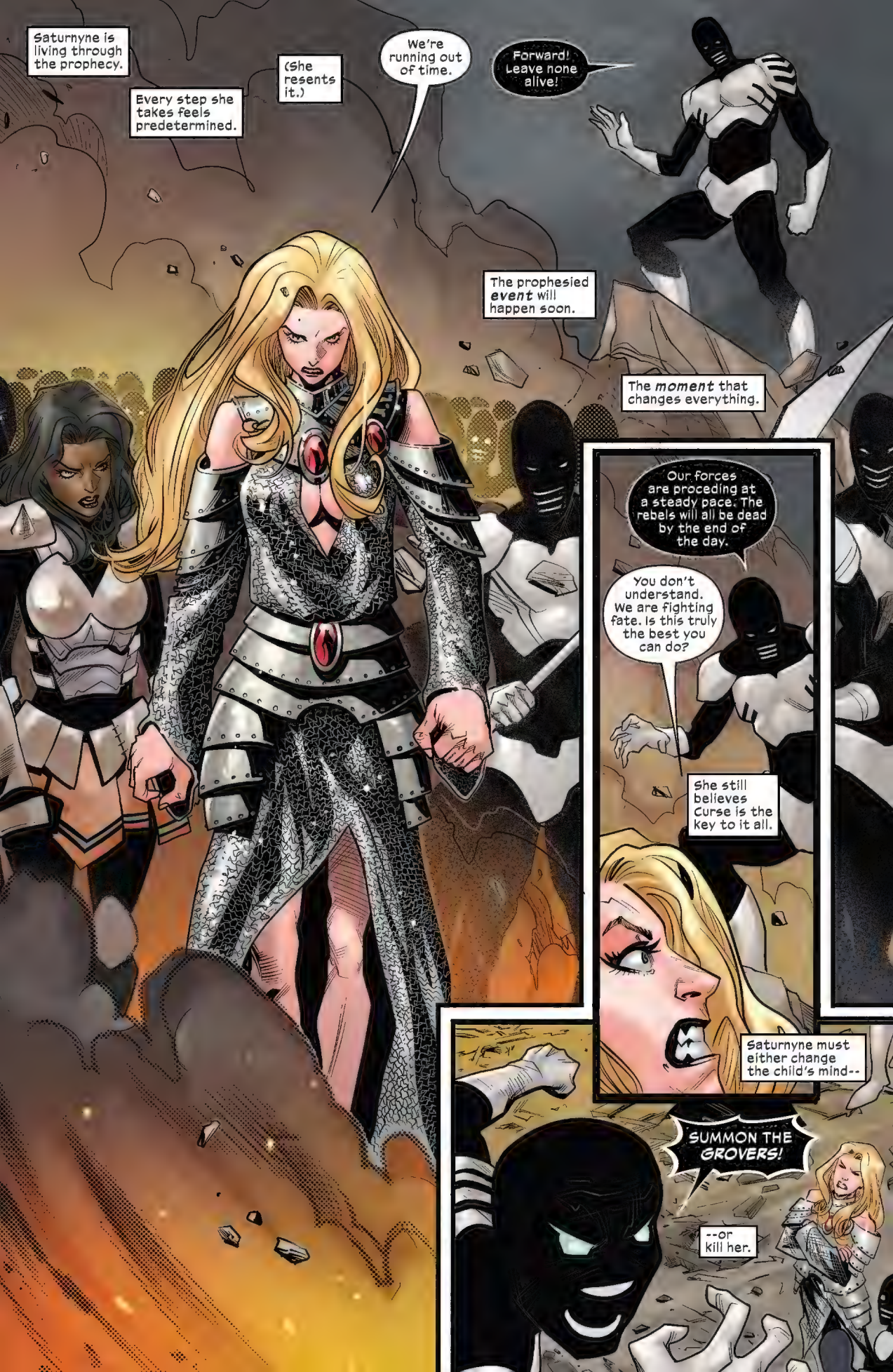
It is mesmerizing.
There, yet not there at all.
Magik! You...you came back!
Of course. I was never going to leave you with Saturnyne.

I'm so sorry!
I'm... Yuck. I got soldier on me.
We can take care of-- wait, what is *that?*

I think it's what she wants from me.
It's like a power...thing. It's hidden in another dimension.
Which is kinda cool, I have to admit. But I don't know what I'm supposed to do--


She thinks you can jinx it back to the realm.
But if it's hidden, it's hidden for a reason. Let's get out of here.

Saturnyne wanted slaughter.
She got a battle instead.
Saturnyne watches the fight with unease.
KABOOOM
Found the fuel tanks!
It's about to get hot in here.


Saturnyne is living through the prophecy.
Every step she takes feels predetermined.
(She resents it.)
We're running out of time.
Forward! Leave none alive!
The prophesied *event* will happen soon.
The *moment* that changes everything.
Our forces are proceding at a steady pace. The rebels will all be dead by the end of the day.
You don't understand. We are fighting fate. Is this truly the best you can do?
She still believes Curse is the key to it all.
Saturnyne must either change the child's mind--
SUMMON THE GROVERS!
--or kill her.

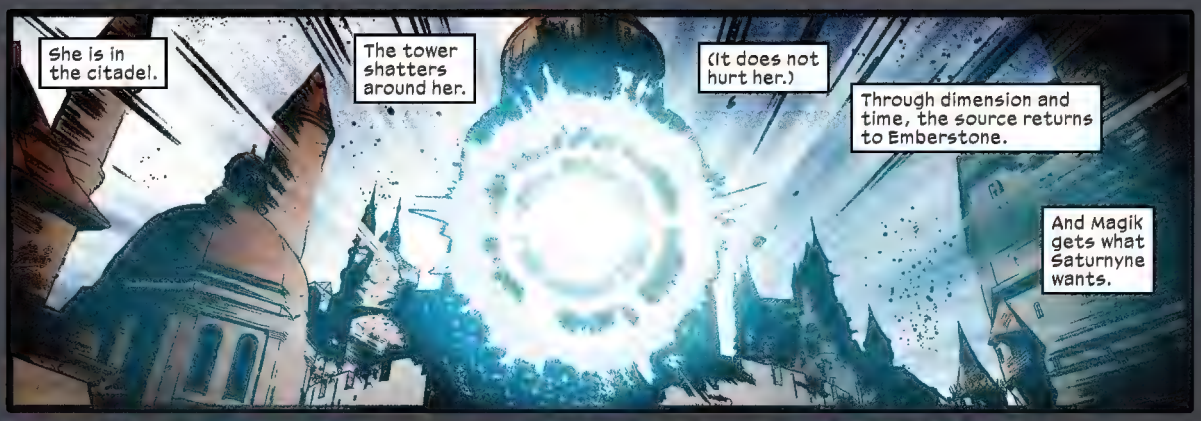
As death rains from above--
Where are we going? I can't see anything!
It's Dust! Follow the storm!
--Sooraya guides them through the battlefield.
Bringing them together.
Oh no, did you forget how to use your muscles?
Magik! Curse! You're alive!
Hells yes! And she got her magic back!
AIIIEEEEEEE!
...How? Are you okay, Magik?
This is not my magic.
This is wild and dark magic.
Where is Mary?
She's over--
--there.
WATCH OUT!
Get out of range, Mary! Run!
We're not dying here, Vonos!

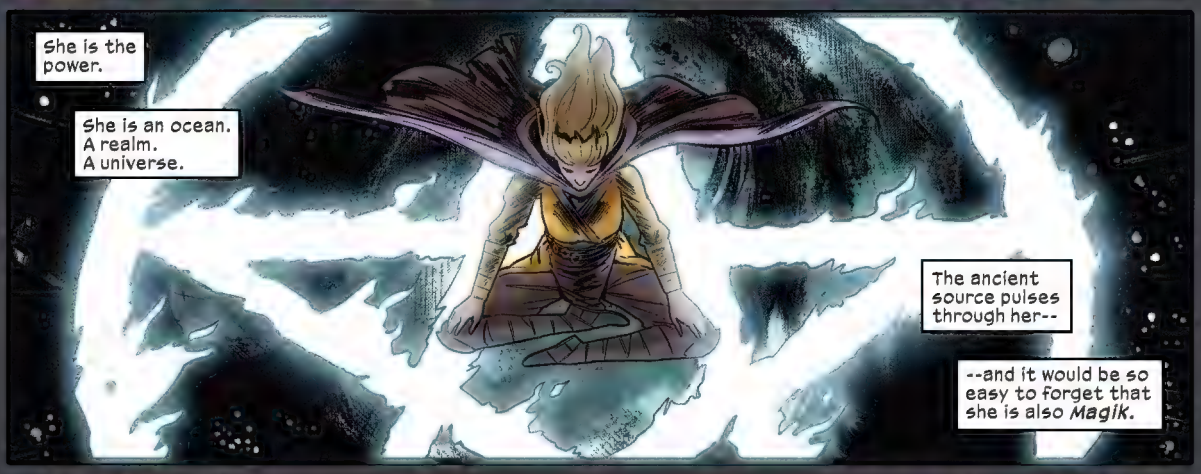
Curse hears a whisper in the wind.
This is your fault, Curse.
NOOOOOO!
Saturnyne's voice is sweet and lovely.
You could have stopped this before it began.
Wh-what? Me?
You cou d stop it now, yet you choose not to.
Know, Curse... that when they die, it will be your fault.
That's not true! You lie!
Curse cannot tell if it is real or not.
VONOS! NOOOO! NO, NO!
He's gone, Mary. He's gone.
And she does not know what to do.
(And she cannot hear the enemy coming up behind her.)
KRUUUUUMBLLEEE
What is that?
It's hope.
NO! It's too @&%$#&@ little, too bloody late!

While Thor Odinson sees the death of his allies--
--Freyja Freyrdottir sees the death of her home.
It tears her heart to pieces.
UNHAND THAT PINK CHILD!
Saturnyne, you have deceived our eyes.
You have attacked our ally.
The mercy of Asgard extends only so far. We will accept your surrender now, or we will fight you to the end.
"The mercy of Asgard"?
Eh, kind of NPC. Like, who talks like that?
Np--what?
Sif! Use the Bifrost and get the children and wounded out of here.
I'm not a child...
FORWARD!

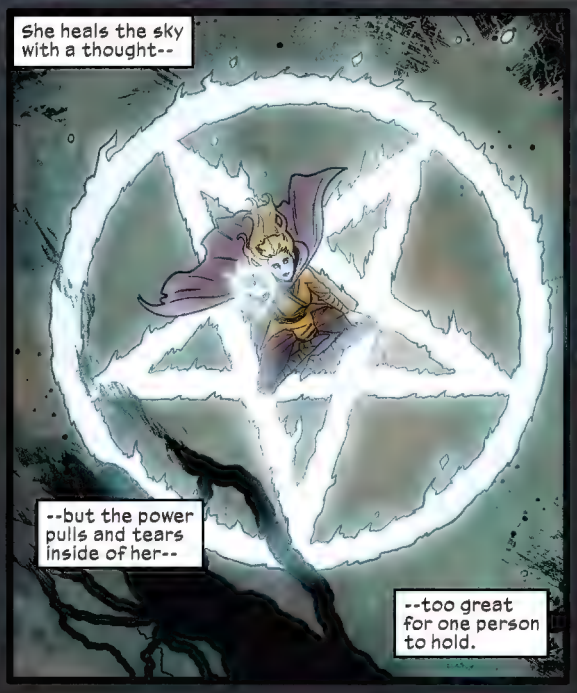
This is the moment.
The final seconds of the future.
Come back to me, Curse. I will stop this. I wil bring them back. I will make it all better.
Just come back to me. Give me what I need...or die and get out of my way.
Saturnyne knows her time is running out. Even if she is winning, even if her forces overwhelm those of Asgard and Vanaheim combined, she fears the twist of fate.
As she orders the death of the child, her sweet words travel across the battlefield.
A desperate act to reach the child.
It's not going to be enough, is it?
You can't think like that. We need to keep fighting!
No...for every ship he takes down, two more come through the rip!
And he's, like, a god!
Dani! We need to get Curse out of here! Saturnyne is sending everyone after her.
Sif! Can you hear us? Curse needs to--
NO! I'm not going!

Curse, Saturnyne's trying to kill you!
Why does she want Curse dead so bad?
What would it take to make it live again? The realm? The people? Can you bring them back?
There's no magic that *truly* makes something live again, Curse.
There must be. Saturnyne said there was!
If we stop Saturnyne, *new life* can flourish here. The ancient trees are still holding on.
The world is not dead yet. We can't give up!
But there is no way to bring back what is lost.
As the moment of prophecy arrives on the battlefield, Curse must make a choice...
...and so she does.
I...
Wouldn't it be cool if Magik got what that power-hungry witch wants?
Curse! What did you d--
Curse hurts.
And Magik is pulled away.
And the prophecy is fulfilled.

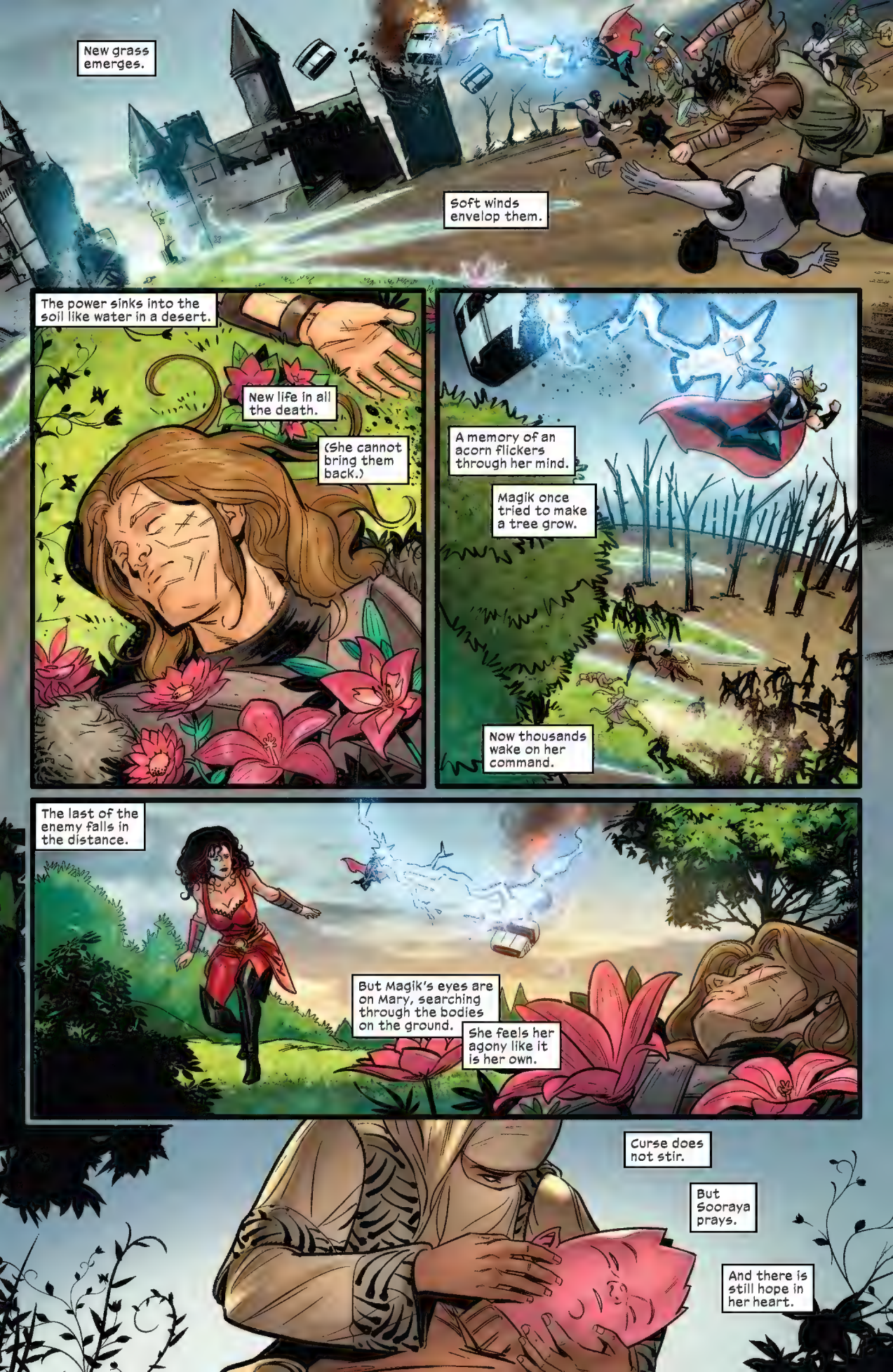

She is in the citadel.
The tower shatters around her.
(It does not hurt her.)
Through dimension and time, the source returns to Emberstone.
And Magik gets what Saturnyne wants.


She is the power.
She is an ocean. A realm. A universe.
The ancient source pulses through her--
--and it would be so easy to forget that she is also *Magik*.

But she remembers Curse--
--and Curse *hurts*.
And then she remembers everything.


She heals the sky with a thought--
--but the power pulls and tears inside of her--
--too great for one person to hold.

So she gives power back to the realm.


New grass emerges.
Soft winds envelop them.
The power sinks into the soil like water in a desert.
New life in all the death.
(She cannot bring them back.)
A memory of an acorn flickers through her mind.
Magik once tried to make a tree grow.
Now thousands wake on her command.
The last of the enemy falls in the distance.
But Magik's eyes are on Mary, searching through the bodies on the ground.
She feels her agony like it is her own.
Curse does not stir.
But Sooraya prays.
And there is still hope in her heart.

Magik sees the moment Saturnyne knows she has lost.
I can feel your eyes on me.
Curse gave you the source.
The litt e fool.

And then you gave it away. You're a fool too, Magik.

I gave back what you took from the realm, Saturnyne. Nothing more.
Saturnyne is already gone. Magik's words do not reach her.
(She would not have understood them if they did.)

There is victory, but there is no triumph.
Magik sees the question in Mary's eyes.
(But she cannot bring the dead back.)

Dani sees the question in Magik's eyes.
Curse is breathing.
(And the realm sighs with relief.)

A few days later.
The future has returned to Vanaheim.
It is in the wind--
--in the water--
--in the very air they breathe.
So, what happened to the horse?
The giant kept it! But he did not know that it was already with child by the dire wolf. Got a bit of a surprise eleven months later.
It's the king!
The Vanir mourn their fallen.
But life has returned to the realm.
Life--
Dire-wolf-horse?! Bril-lil-ant!
--and laughter.
I have been wondering--
--what is an NPC, Curse?
--And for all intents and purposes, Krakoa is abandoned.
Midgard is not a safe place for mutants at the moment. You are being hunted.
That is precisely why we need to return, Freyja.
When our people fight, we fight with them.
The mutants do not ask about the future.
(They know it would not make any difference.)

The Bifrost will take you wherever you wish.
Then take us *home.*
Why do they call you King?
Well, I *am* king of Asgard.
Yeah, I don't see it. Maybe, like a court jester. Or, like...a groom of the stool.
For the love of all the goddamn gods, no more goodbyes. We're ready
Very well.
On behalf of Vanaheim, we thank you.
Until next time, my friends.
Sif!
On her king's orders, Sif sends them *home.*
They return to another fight. Another kind of war.
Awesome.
(And another adventure.)
The End.

Rebirth

Annotated by Frider Frostborn,
Current head librarian at the Library of Prophecy.

I write this as the Library of Prophecy turns into a Library of Unreliable Histories (most libraries are, to be fair).

In the days after the rebirth of our realm, I had the honor of consulting the mutants about the events that occurred before and during the battle. I asked them about specific turns in what we consider the most accurate of our recorded prophecies, and together, we managed to clarify the significance of several previously unknown stanzas. Yet some remain shrouded in mystery. Goddard once spent a month writing about clay pigeons. We believed they would be pertinent to the battle, but other than accidentally knocking out two guards in the hours before the war, we cannot see how they played any major part in the conflict.

Therein lies the problem with prophecy. Its purpose, assuming one subscribes to the idea that there is one, is about as hard to spot as a singular raindrop in a storm.

Yet it is what I do.

I asked the mutants if they wanted me to consult their futures before they returned home. Lady Mary answered that she would rather sit through a recreational root canal. I do not know exactly what that means, but she seemed to speak for them all.

I am relieved. Though our future stretches before us once more, theirs is clouded, and when I look into it, I do not understand the images I see. A white room. An island lonely. The anger and hurt of a family found.

Realm of X #1 by Stephanie Hans

Realm of X #2 by Stephanie Hans

Realm of X #3 by Stephanie Hans

Realm of X #4 by Stephanie Hans

Realm of X #1 Variant by Chris Bachalo

Realm of X #1 Variant

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& Jim Campbell

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Stranded in Vanaheim!

Leaping straight from the astonishing aftermath of the Hellfire Gala, the unlikely group of Magik, Mirage, Marrow and Dust must somehow find a way to work alongside...Typhoid Mary! Even more confounding, the locals seem to believe that the mutants hold the key to fulfilling a prophecy that can either raise the realm to riches — or cause it to fall to ruin.

With Magik's powers malfunctioning and a mysterious figure amassing power on the outskirts of Vanaheim, these X-Men are going to have to band together if they want to stay alive long enough to find their way home! Lost and at the end of her rope, Dani beseeches her former friends in Asgard for help — but will reinforcements arrive in time to turn the tide?

Collecting:
Realm of X (2023) #1–4

By:
Torunn Grønbekk, Diógenes Neves, Bruno Oliveira, Rafael Pimentel, Rain Beredo and Protobunker's Dono Sánchez-Almara

MARVEL T+